(1)

Supreme Court, U.S.
FILED

NO. 03 518 SEP 24 2003

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

STATE OF ARIZONA,
PETITIONER,

-vs-

ARTURO ANDA CANEZ,
RESPONDENT.

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

TERRY GODDARD
ATTORNEY GENERAL

KENT E. CATTANI
CHIEF COUNSEL
CAPITAL LITIGATION SECTION

ROBERT L. ELLMAN
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
(COUNSEL OF RECORD)
1275 WEST WASHINGTON
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007–2997
TELEPHONE: (602) 542–4686

ATTORNEYS FOR PETITIONER

108 pp

QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

I. In *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584, 609 (2002) (*Ring II*), this Court held that the Sixth Amendment entitles an Arizona capital murder defendant to have a jury, rather than a judge, determine the presence of at least one aggravating circumstance that renders the defendant death eligible. *Ring II* extended to capital cases the holding in *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466 (2002), that the Sixth Amendment jury trial right applies to the determination of a fact that increases the sentencing range for a charged offense. *Id.*

II. Did the Arizona Supreme Court err by holding that *Ring II* requires not only a jury determination of an aggravating factor rendering the defendant eligible for the death penalty, but also a jury determination of the existence of mitigating circumstances and whether the mitigating circumstances are sufficiently substantial to warrant leniency?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW i

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES iv

OPINION BELOW 1

STATEMENT OF JURISDICTION 1

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INVOLVED 1

STATEMENT OF THE CASE 2

REASONS WHY THE WRIT SHOULD ISSUE 4

ARGUMENTS 6

I.

THERE IS A CONFLICT AMONG THE STATES REGARDING WHETHER, UNDER *RING V. ARIZONA*, THE SIXTH AMENDMENT JURY TRIAL RIGHT IN CAPITAL CASE SENTENCING PROCEEDINGS EXTENDS BEYOND THE RIGHT TO A JURY DETERMINATION OF AN AGGRAVATING CIRCUMSTANCE THAT RENDERS THE DEFENDANT ELIGIBLE FOR THE DEATH PENALTY. ... 6

II.

THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT ERRED BY FINDING THAT *RING V. ARIZONA* ESTABLISHES A SIXTH AMENDMENT RIGHT TO HAVE A JURY ASSESS WHETHER MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES EXIST AND WHETHER THE MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SUFFICIENT TO WARRANT LENIENCY. 8

CONCLUSION 16

APPENDIX A A-1

APPENDIX B B-1

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES — PAGE

Almendarez-Torres v. United States, 523 U.S. 224 (1998) 7, 12
Apprendi v. New Jersey, 530 U.S. 466 (2002) 5, 7-10, 12, 14
Bottoson v. Moore, 833 So.2d 693 (Fla. 2002) 7
Brice v. Delaware, 815 A.2d 314 (Del. 2003) 6
Ex parte Hodges v. State, 2003 WL 1145451 (Ala. Mar. 14, 2003) 7
Ex parte Waldrop, 2002 WL 31630710 (Ala. Nov. 22, 2002) 7
Johnson v. Nevada, 59 P.3d 450 (Nev. 2002) 6
Jones (Nathaniel) v. United States, 526 U.S. 227 (1999) 10, 14
Nebraska v. Gales, 658 N.W.2d 604 (Neb. 2003) 6
Ring v. Arizona, 536 U.S. 584 (2002) (Ring II) 1-15
State v. Canez, 42 P.3d 564 (Ariz. 2002) (Canez I) 2, 12
State v. Canez, 74 P.3d 932
(Ariz. 2003) (Canez II) 1, 3-4, 6, 11-13, 15
State v. Ring, 25 P.3d 1139 (Ariz. 2001) (Ring I) 8
State v. Ring, 65 P.3d 915 (2003) (Ring III) 3, 4, 11, 12, 15
State v. Torres, 58 P.3d 214 (Crim. App. Okla. (2002) 7
United States v. Cotton, 535 U.S. 625 (2002) 15
United States v. Harris, 536 U.S. 545 (2002) 13, 14
Walton v. Arizona, 497 U.S. 639 (1990) 8
Woldt v. Colorado, 64 P.3d 256 (Col. 2003) 6
Wrinkles v. State, 776 N.E. 2d 905 7
Zant v. Stephens, 462 U.S. 862 (1983) 14

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Ariz. Const., amend. V 5
Ariz. Const., amend. VI 1, 3-6, 8, 10, 12-14
Ariz. Const., amend. VIII 12
Ariz. Const., amend. XIV 1
U.S. Const. art. III, § 2 1

STATUTES

28 U.S.C. § 1257(a) 1
A.R.S. § 13–703 ..... 2, 8, 14
A.R.S. § 13–703(F) 2
A.R.S. § 13–703(F)(5) 4
A.R.S. § 13–703(F)(6) 4
A.R.S. § 13–703(F)(9) 3

RULES

Rule 10.1, Rules of Supreme Court 7

OPINION BELOW

On June 30, 2003, the Arizona Supreme Court vacated Respondent Arturo Anda Canez's death sentence and remanded the case for resentencing upon finding that *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584 (2002) ("*Ring II*"), requires that a jury determine whether aggravating circumstances outweigh mitigating circumstances. *State v. Canez*, 74 P.3d 932, ¶¶ 22, 27-28 (Ariz. 2003) ("*Canez II*"). (Appendix A.)

STATEMENT OF JURISDICTION

Petitioners respectfully request that a writ of certiorari issue to review the decision of the Arizona Supreme Court holding that *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584 (2002) ("*Ring II*"), requires that a jury determine whether aggravating circumstances outweigh mitigating circumstances. *State v. Canez*, 74 P.3d 932, ¶¶ 22, 27-28 (Ariz. 2003). (Appendix A.)

The Arizona Supreme Court issued its decision on June 30, 2003. Petitioner timely filed the petition for writ of certiorari within 90 days of that decision. This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to United States Constitution Article III, Section 2; 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a); and Supreme Court Rule 10.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INVOLVED

The Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides, in relevant part, "In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed...."

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides, in relevant part, "No State shall...deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law...."

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Respondent fatally bludgeoned and stabbed his 77-year-old victim in February, 1996. *State v. Canez*, 42 P.3d 564 at ¶¶ 2, 9, 13 (Ariz. 2002) ("*Canez I*"). He entered the victim's home in the middle of the night and killed him for the cash in his wallet, a television, and a stereo system. *Id.* at ¶¶ 2–13. In February, 1998, a Maricopa County, Arizona jury convicted him of first-degree felony murder, first-degree burglary, and two counts of armed robbery in connection with the events surrounding the murder. *Id.* at ¶ 15.

The trial court sentenced Respondent to death under the former version of Arizona's capital sentencing statute, section 13–703 of the Arizona Revised Statutes. *Canez I*, 42 P.3d 564 at ¶ 15. That statute permitted a judge, rather than a jury, to determine whether at least one statutory aggravating circumstance existed under subsection 703(F) of the statute. Upon such a finding, a convicted murderer became eligible for a death sentence.

In this case, the trial court found that four separate aggravating circumstances supported a death sentence. Specifically, the trial court found that Respondent had committed prior serious offenses; that his victim was at least 70 years of age; that Respondent committed the murder for pecuniary gain; and that Respondent committed the murder in an especially cruel, heinous or depraved manner. *Canez I*, 42 P.3d 564 at ¶¶ 84, 90-91, 99.

On direct appeal, the Arizona Supreme Court affirmed Respondent's murder conviction and death sentence. *Canez I*, 42 P.3d 564 at ¶ 143. In conducting an independent review of the evidence supporting the death sentence, the Arizona Supreme Court found the State had proven beyond a reasonable doubt that Respondent had committed prior serious offenses; that his victim was at least 70 years of age; that Respondent committed the murder for pecuniary gain; and that Respondent committed the murder in an especially cruel manner. *Id.* at ¶¶ 90, 97, 99. However, the Arizona Supreme Court did not agree that the State had proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the murder

was especially heinous or depraved, and vacated the trial court's finding as to those facts. *Id.* at ¶ 109. After independently reweighing the aggravating circumstances against the mitigating circumstances, the Arizona Supreme Court upheld the death sentence, stating, "In light of the four statutory aggravating circumstances established beyond a reasonable doubt, the absence of statutory mitigation, and the minimal weight of the non-statutory mitigating circumstances, we independently conclude that the mitigating circumstances are insufficient to call for leniency." *Id.* at ¶ 126.

This Court decided *Ring II* before the Arizona Supreme Court's decision became final with the issuance of the mandate. The decision in *Ring II* prompted the Arizona Supreme Court to consolidate all capital cases in which the direct appeal was not yet final for the purpose of determining whether *Ring* required reversal or vacatur of the death sentences. In the consolidated proceeding, the court held, among other things, that (i) Sixth Amendment error under *Ring* could be harmless, (ii) *Ring* recognizes a Sixth Amendment right to have a jury determine the existence of mitigating circumstances in capital cases, and (iii) *Ring* recognizes a Sixth Amendment right to have a jury weigh aggravating circumstances against mitigating circumstances to determine whether death is the appropriate sentence. *State v. Ring*, 65 P.3d 915, ¶¶ 50, 63, 88–89 (2003) ("*Ring III*") (Appendix B). In light of those conclusions, the Arizona Supreme Court determined that it would examine each of the consolidated cases pending on direct review and apply those holdings to determine whether the *Ring* error was harmless. *Id.* at ¶ 104.

In the case below (*Canez II*), the Arizona Supreme Court applied its holdings in *Ring III* to Respondent's case and vacated his death sentence. The court examined the *Ring* error as applied to Respondent and upheld two of the four aggravating circumstances notwithstanding the absence of a jury finding. The court upheld the finding of prior convictions on the ground that such findings are exempt from *Ring* error. *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932 at ¶ 6. The court also upheld the aggravating circumstance under A.R.S. § 13-703(F)(9) (victim at least 70 years old), stating that "the evidence presented concerning the

victim's age was overwhelming and uncontroverted," and that the *Ring* error as to that circumstance was therefore harmless. *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932 at ¶ 9. However, the court refused to uphold the aggravating circumstances found under A.R.S. §§ 13-703(F)(5) (pecuniary gain) and (F)(6) (special cruelty), because it could not find beyond a reasonable doubt that every reasonable juror hearing the same evidence would necessarily have found that those circumstances existed. *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932 at ¶¶ 12, 16.

The court went on to find, as it has in every post-*Ring III* case to date, that it could not "conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that no rational trier of fact would determine that the mitigating circumstances were sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." *Id.* at ¶ 22. Consequently, the court vacated Respondent's death sentence and remanded the case for a jury trial to (i) redetermine whether aggravating circumstances existed under A.R.S. §§ 13-703(F)(5) and (F)(6), and (ii) redetermine whether there was mitigation evidence sufficiently substantial to call for leniency. *Id.* at ¶ 28.

Petitioner now seeks a writ of certiorari to the Arizona Supreme Court to challenge that court's ruling that the Sixth Amendment, as interpreted in *Ring II*, affords capital defendants the right to have a jury determine (1) whether more than one aggravating circumstance exists where anyone aggravating circumstance renders the defendant death eligible, and (2) the existence and relative weight of mitigating circumstances.

REASONS WHY THE WRIT SHOULD ISSUE

There is a conflict among the states regarding how to apply *Ring II*. The Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado Supreme Courts have broadly interpreted *Ring II* error to include the determination of mitigating circumstances and the weighing and balancing of aggravation and mitigation. That conclusion conflicts with rulings from appellate courts in Delaware, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Alabama, Indiana, and Florida. This Court should accept review to clarify this confusion regarding the application of *Ring II*.

Ring II does not establish a Sixth Amendment right to have a jury determine whether mitigating circumstances exist and whether mitigation is sufficiently substantial to warrant leniency. In *Ring II*, this Court noted that the issue presented was very narrow—whether an aggravating factor that makes a defendant death eligible may be found by the judge, or whether the Sixth Amendment's jury trial guarantee applies to that finding. *Ring II* was based on this Court's decision in *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466 (2002), that the jury trial guarantee extends to any fact that increases the sentencing range. In Arizona, a finding of at least one aggravating circumstance necessarily increases the sentencing range to include a possible death sentence. Thus, a jury finding (or a finding of harmless error) regarding the existence of at least one aggravating circumstance extends the sentencing range to include a possible death sentence and therefore satisfies *Ring II*.

Finally, the Arizona Supreme Court's ruling affects not only the instant case, but approximately 20 other Arizona cases that were pending on direct review at the time this Court decided *Ring II*, and that involve uncontroverted and/or overwhelming evidence of at least one aggravating circumstance. This Court should accept review to avert unwarranted resentencing proceedings, with their concomitant costs to the State and to victims, in those cases.

ARGUMENTS

I.

THERE IS A CONFLICT AMONG THE STATES REGARDING WHETHER, UNDER *RING V. ARIZONA*, THE SIXTH AMENDMENT JURY TRIAL RIGHT IN CAPITAL CASE SENTENCING PROCEEDINGS EXTENDS BEYOND THE RIGHT TO A JURY DETERMINATION OF AN AGGRAVATING CIRCUMSTANCE THAT RENDERS THE DEFENDANT ELIGIBLE FOR THE DEATH PENALTY.

State courts have reached conflicting conclusions regarding the scope of *Ring II*. The Arizona Supreme Court held in the instant case that, under *Ring II*, there is a Sixth Amendment right to a jury determination of whether mitigating circumstances exist and whether those circumstances are sufficiently substantial to warrant leniency. *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932, at ¶ 17. The Colorado Supreme Court recently reached the same conclusion in *Woldt v. Colorado*, 64 P.3d 256, 265–66 (Col. 2003), as did the Nevada Supreme Court in *Johnson v. Nevada*, 59 P.3d 450, 460 (Nev. 2002).

In contrast, the Delaware Supreme Court has ruled that *Ring II* does *not* extend to the weighing phase of the capital sentencing process; once a jury finds a statutory aggravating circumstance that renders the defendant death eligible, a sentencing judge may weigh aggravating and mitigating circumstances. *Brice v. Delaware*, 815 A.2d 314, 322 (Del. 2003). The Nebraska Supreme Court has similarly ruled that *Ring II* does not afford capital defendants the right to have a jury weigh and balance aggravating and mitigating circumstances; those determinations fall outside the jury's "eligibility" decision and instead are part of the "selection decision," which can be performed by a judge without violating the Sixth Amendment. *Nebraska v. Gales*, 658 N.W.2d 604, 623 (Neb. 2003) ("[W]e interpret *Ring* as affecting only the narrow issue of whether there is a Sixth Amendment right to have a jury

determine the existence of any aggravating circumstance upon which a capital sentence is based.").

Alabama, Oklahoma, Florida, and Indiana courts have similarly rejected the notion that *Ring II* requires that a jury weigh aggravating and mitigating circumstances. In *Ex parte Waldrop*, 2002 WL 31630710 (Ala. Nov. 22, 2002) (not yet released for publication), the Supreme Court of Alabama upheld a judicial-override provision in Alabama's capital sentencing scheme that permits a judge to sentence a defendant to death notwithstanding a jury recommendation of life. The Alabama Supreme Court rejected, among other arguments, Waldrop's claim that, under *Ring II*, the process of deciding whether the aggravating circumstances outweigh the mitigating circumstances is a factual finding subject to the Sixth Amendment jury trial guarantee. 2002 WL 31630710, at * 7. *See also Ex parte Hodges v. State*, 2003 WL 1145451, *6, *7 (Ala. Mar. 14, 2003) (not yet released for publication) (upholding judicial-override provision; because the defendant was eligible for the death penalty when the jury found that he committed the murder while he was engaged in a robbery, the subsequent determination by the trial court that the especially heinous, atrocious, or cruel factor was established and that aggravating circumstances outweighed the mitigating circumstances did not implicate *Ring II* or *Apprendi*) (not yet released for publication); *State v. Torres*, 58 P.3d 214 (Crim. App. Okla. 2002) (rejecting claim that *Ring II* precludes an appellate court from reweighing the evidence of aggravating and mitigating circumstances after invalidating an aggravating circumstance: "Oklahoma's provision that jurors make the factual finding of an aggravating circumstance beyond a reasonable doubt is all that *Ring [II]* requires."); *Bottoson v. Moore*, 833 So.2d 693 (Fla. 2002) (per curiam opinion analyzing effect of *Ring II* on Florida statutory scheme and denying post-conviction relief based on *Ring II*; two Justices concurred only because one of the four aggravators found in connection with the murder was Bottoson's prior conviction of a crime involving the threat of violence—an aggravator that need not be found by the jury under *Almendarez-Torres*); *Wrinkles v. State*, 776 N.E.2d 905, 907–08 (Ind. 2002) (multiple murders aggravating

circumstance implicit in jury's verdict; therefore *Ring II* is not implicated).

Given the clear conflict in the way state courts have interpreted this Court's Sixth Amendment analysis in *Ring II*, this Court should accept certiorari review in the instant case to provide guidance and clarity.

II.

THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT ERRED BY FINDING THAT *RING V. ARIZONA* ESTABLISHES A SIXTH AMENDMENT RIGHT TO HAVE A JURY ASSESS WHETHER MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES EXIST AND WHETHER THE MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SUFFICIENT TO WARRANT LENIENCY.

In *Ring II*, this Court held that Arizona's death penalty sentencing statute offended the Sixth Amendment to the extent it required a judge, rather than a jury, to determine the presence or absence of an aggravating circumstance that renders a first-degree murder defendant eligible for the death penalty. Based on *Apprendi*'s holding that, other than the fact of a prior conviction, any fact that increases the penalty for a crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum must be submitted to a jury, this Court overruled *Walton v. Arizona*, 497 U.S. 639 (1990), in which this Court had rejected the same Sixth Amendment challenge to Arizona's statute (A.R.S. § 13–703). *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at 609.

The Arizona Supreme Court has interpreted *Ring II* too broadly. This Court's analysis in *Ring II* focused on whether a finding that an aggravating factor existed *increased the range of sentence* the defendant faced. *See* 536 U.S. at 602. The Arizona Supreme Court had indicated in *State v. Ring*, 25 P.3d 1139, 1151 (Ariz. 2001) (*Ring I*), that "the death sentence becomes possible only after the trial judge makes a factual finding that *at least one* aggravating factor is present." (Emphasis added.)

Relying on the Arizona Supreme Court's interpretation of Arizona law, this Court found that Arizona's first-degree murder statute authorized a maximum penalty of death "only in a formal sense." This Court stated:

> A defendant convicted of first-degree murder in Arizona cannot receive a death sentence unless a judge makes the factual determination that *a statutory aggravating factor exists*. Without that critical finding, the maximum sentence to which the defendant is exposed is life imprisonment, and not the death penalty.
>
> . . .
>
> Based solely on the jury's verdict finding Ring guilty of first-degree felony murder, the maximum punishment he could have received was life imprisonment. This was so because, in Arizona, a "death sentence may not legally be imposed . . . unless *at least one aggravating factor* is found to exist beyond a reasonable doubt."

536 U.S. at 596 (internal quotes omitted, emphasis added). This Court thus held that "the required finding [of an aggravated circumstance] expose[d] [Ring] to a greater punishment than that authorized by the jury's guilty verdict." 536 U.S. at 604 (quoting *Apprendi*, 530 U.S. at 494).

Apprendi similarly focused on whether a court could impose a sentence *beyond the range* authorized by the jury's verdict. Apprendi pled guilty to possession of a firearm for an unlawful purpose, a crime designated in New Jersey's substantive criminal statute as a second-degree offense, punishable under New Jersey's felony sentencing statute by a 5 to 10-year prison term. *Apprendi*, 530 U.S. at 468–70. The charging instrument made no reference to a third New Jersey statute aimed at hate crime, which enhanced the sentencing range from the second-degree to first-degree level (from 10 to 20 years) upon a finding by the sentencing court (by a preponderance of the evidence) that the defendant committed the crime with a racially biased purpose.

Id. at 469. The New Jersey trial court made such a finding and imposed a 12-year sentence, which two state appellate courts subsequently upheld. *Id.* at 471.

This Court determined that Apprendi had a constitutional right to a jury finding on the issue of racial bias, and held that enhancement under New Jersey's hate crime statute violated the Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial because it effectively convicted Apprendi of a greater, uncharged offense. *Id.* at 475–76, 494 n.19. Confirming a principle previously set forth in *Jones (Nathaniel) v. United States*, 526 U.S. 227 (1999), this Court stated:

> Other than the fact of a prior conviction, any fact that increases the penalty for a crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum must be submitted to a jury, and proved beyond a reasonable doubt. . . . "[I]t is unconstitutional for a legislature to remove from the jury the assessment of facts that increase the prescribed range of penalties to which a criminal defendant is exposed."

Apprendi, 530 U.S. at 490 (citing *Jones*, 526 U.S. at 252–53). This Court was careful to point out, however, that not every factual determination relating to sentencing need be found by a jury:

> We should be clear that nothing in this [common-law] history suggests that it is impermissible for judges to exercise discretion—taking into consideration various factors relating both to offense and offender—in imposing a judgment *within the range* prescribed by statute. We have often noted that judges in this country have long exercised discretion of this nature in imposing sentence *within statutory limits* in the individual case. *See e.g., Williams v. New York*, 337 U.S. 241, 246, 69 S. Ct. 1079, 93 L. Ed. 1337 (1949) . . . .

530 U.S. at 481 (emphasis in original).

In the consolidated proceedings conducted by the Arizona Supreme Court following *Ring II*, the State argued that the court should uphold capital sentences imposed under Arizona's disapproved, former statute in three circumstances: (1) where the jury implicitly found one aggravating factor, (2) where the trial judge found one factor established by overwhelming and essentially uncontroverted evidence, or (3) where the aggravator was outside the purview of *Ring II*. Any one of these findings renders the defendant "death eligible" based on the presence of one aggravating factor. The State posited that nothing in *Ring II* prevents a trial judge from finding additional aggravating circumstances, as well as finding mitigating circumstances and balancing them against the aggravating circumstances.

The Arizona Supreme Court rejected the State's argument. The court acknowledged that "[a] narrow reading of *Ring II* may permit a judge to decide the existence of additional aggravating factors," but nevertheless concluded that *Ring II* requires a jury to consider all aggravating factors urged by the State. The Arizona Supreme Court further noted that the death penalty could not have been imposed under the statute in place when Canez was sentenced unless the trial court, acting as the sentencer, concluded that mitigating factors were not sufficiently substantial to call for leniency. The court thus held that an analysis of *Ring II* error includes a determination of the mitigating circumstances and whether those circumstances outweigh the aggravating circumstances. *Ring III*, 65 P.3d 915, ¶ 88–89; *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932, at ¶17.

The Arizona Supreme Court's expansive reading of *Ring II* is unwarranted given the narrow scope of the issue addressed in *Ring II*:

> Ring's claim is tightly delineated: He contends only that the Sixth Amendment required jury findings on the aggravating circumstances asserted against him. No aggravating circumstance related to past convictions in his case; Ring therefore does not challenge *Almendarez-Torres v. United States*, 523 U.S. 224, 118 S.Ct. 1219, 140 L.Ed.2d 350 (1998), which held that the fact of prior conviction may be

> found by the judge even if it increases the statutory maximum sentence. He makes no Sixth Amendment claim with respect to mitigating circumstances. *See Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466, 490-491, n. 16, 120 S.Ct. 2348, 147 L.Ed.2d 435 (2000) (noting "the distinction the Court has often recognized between facts in aggravation of punishment and facts in mitigation" (citation omitted)). Nor does he argue that the Sixth Amendment required the jury to make the ultimate determination whether to impose the death penalty. *See Proffitt v. Florida*, 428 U.S. 242, 252, 96 S.Ct. 2960, 49 L.Ed.2d 913 (1976) (plurality opinion) ("[I]t has never [been] suggested that jury sentencing is constitutionally required."). He does not question the Arizona Supreme Court's authority to reweigh the aggravating and mitigating circumstances after that court struck one aggravator. *See Clemons v. Mississippi*, 494 U.S. 738, 745, 110 S.Ct. 1441, 108 L.Ed.2d 725 (1990).

536 U.S. at 597 n.4. Furthermore, both *Ring II* and *Apprendi* focused exclusively on a Sixth Amendment requirement that the jury make factual findings that set the outer limits of the sentencing *range*. Neither case established a Sixth Amendment basis for requiring a jury to make the ultimate sentencing decision; such a requirement was urged only by Justice Breyer in a concurring opinion. *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at 614 (Breyer, J. concurring based on his belief that the Eighth Amendment mandates jury sentencing in capital cases). Thus, when a state court finds that an aggravating circumstance is outside the purview of *Ring II*, or that *Ring II* error relating to one aggravating circumstance is harmless, that finding satisfies the Sixth Amendment requirements set forth in *Ring II* and *Apprendi*.

In the present case, two of the aggravating circumstances fit those descriptions. One aggravating circumstance found by the trial court, and again by the Arizona Supreme Court on independent review, was that Respondent had four prior convictions for serious offenses. *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932, at ¶ 6; *Canez I*, 42 P.3d 564, at ¶ 84. In the post-*Ring II* remanded proceedings in this case, the Arizona Supreme Court found that no error arose with regard to use of the prior

convictions as an aggravating circumstance. In making that finding, the Arizona Supreme Court cited its earlier decision in *Ring III*, 65 P.3d 915, at ¶ 55, in which it relied on *Almendarez-Torres v. United States*, 523 U.S. 224, 226-27 (1998), for the proposition that a judge can consider prior convictions to enhance a penalty beyond that authorized by the facts established by the jury's verdict). *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932, at ¶ 6. The Arizona Supreme Court also found that *Ring II* error was harmless with regard to use of the victim's age as an aggravating circumstance because the evidence was uncontested and overwhelming. *Canez*, 74 P.3d 932, at ¶¶ 7-9; *see also Ring III*, 65 P.3d 915, ¶¶ 53, 86 (*Ring II* error in the finding of an aggravating circumstance can be harmless where evidence is uncontested and/or overwhelming). Those correct rulings satisfied *Ring II* in this case.

However, notwithstanding the lack of *Ring* error with respect to the aggravating circumstance of prior convictions, or the harmlessness of *Ring* error with respect to the aggravating circumstance of the victim's advanced age, the Arizona Supreme Court remanded this case for resentencing. The court did so in the mistaken belief that *Ring II* requires more than a finding of harmless error regarding one aggravating circumstance. Notwithstanding the fact that the sentencing range is already expanded to include a possible death sentence, the court posited that the jurors must determine the existence of *every* alleged aggravating circumstance. *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932, at ¶¶ 12, 16, 27-28. The court also remanded the case for a jury trial in the erroneous belief that *Ring II* gives capital defendants the right to have a jury determine (i) whether mitigating circumstances exist—even though those circumstances do not render a defendant eligible for a sentence greater than life imprisonment, and (ii) whether the mitigating circumstances are sufficiently substantial to call for leniency. *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 932, at ¶¶ 17, 20, 22, 27-28. In sum, the Arizona Supreme Court interprets *Ring II* to extend the Sixth Amendment jury trial guarantee to findings on the existence and weight of mitigation evidence.

This Court's decision in *United States v. Harris*, 536 U.S. 545 (2002), decided the same day as *Ring II*, supports the conclusion that

the Arizona Supreme Court erred by interpreting *Ring II* to require more than a finding of harmless error regarding one aggravating circumstance. In *Harris*, this Court rejected a claim that the Sixth Amendment requires a jury finding of a fact (that the defendant brandished a gun during the commission of the offense) increasing the statutory minimum sentence. 536 U.S. at 554. This Court observed that, unlike a statutory factor that increases the maximum penalty for the defendant's crime, a statutory factor setting a mandatory minimum "ha[s] an effect on the defendant's sentence that is more consistent with traditional understandings about how sentencing factors operate; the required findings constrain, rather than extend, the sentencing judge's discretion." *Id.* This Court further noted that the brandishing statute "does not authorize the judge to impose 'steeply higher penalties'—or higher penalties at all—once the facts in question are found." *Id.*

This Court also reiterated its pronouncement in *Jones* that "[i]t is not, of course, that anyone today would claim that every fact with a bearing on sentencing must be found by a jury; we have resolved that general issue and have no intention of questioning its resolution." *Harris*, 536 U.S. at 558 (citing *Jones*, 526 U.S. at 248). This Court then held that "[j]udicial factfinding in the course of selecting a sentence within the authorized range does not implicate the indictment, jury trial, and reasonable-doubt components of the Fifth and Sixth Amendments." *Id.*

In the present case, findings regarding mitigation likewise operated to "constrain, rather than extend, the sentencing judge's discretion." Once the sentencing range included a possible death sentence based on the presence of at least one statutory aggravating circumstance, there was no *Ring II/Apprendi* error when the trial or appellate court balanced aggravating and mitigating circumstances. *See also Zant v. Stephens*, 462 U.S. 862 (1983) (holding that in a state where aggravating circumstances serve only to make a defendant eligible for the death penalty and not to determine the punishment, the invalidation of one aggravating circumstance does not necessarily require an appellate court to vacate a death sentence and remand to a jury).

Finally, *Ring II* error should be narrowly interpreted because it does not go to the fairness or reliability of the sentencing process. The sentencing error in *Ring II* and in the instant case was that a fair and impartial judge, rather than a fair and impartial jury, determined the existence of aggravating circumstances under A.R.S. § 13–703. The error at issue did not implicate the fundamental fairness of the process, and there is no compelling basis for broadening this Court's holding in *Ring II* beyond the scope of that decision.

In *United States v. Cotton*, 535 U.S. 625, 632–34 (2002), this Court noted the injustice that would result by reversing a sentence based on error that "did not seriously affect the fairness, integrity, or public reputation of judicial proceedings." Such an injustice will occur in the instant case if a resentencing proceeding is required. Given the Arizona Supreme Court's conclusion that no *Ring II* error arose from the finding of the prior conviction and that the evidence relating to a second aggravating circumstance (victim over age 70) was overwhelming and essentially uncontroverted, there is no inherent unfairness to the defendant in ending the harmless error inquiry there. The real threat to the "fairness, integrity, and public reputation of judicial proceedings" would be to require a resentencing in this case notwithstanding a finding of harmlessness as to aggravating factors that set the outer limits of the sentencing range to include a possible death sentence.

Thus, although the Arizona Supreme Court upheld two of the aggravating circumstances that rendered Respondent eligible for the death penalty, the court vacated Respondent's death sentence. The court did so based expressly and solely on its interpretation of this Court's decision in *Ring II* as requiring that "we can affirm a capital sentence only if we can conclude beyond a reasonable doubt 'that no rational trier of fact would determine that the mitigating circumstances were sufficiently substantial to call for leniency.'" *Canez II*, 74 P.3d 792, at ¶ 17 (quoting *Ring III*, 65 P.3d 915, at ¶ 104).

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing authorities and arguments, Petitioner respectfully requests this Court to grant the petition for writ of certiorari.

Respectfully submitted,

TERRY GODDARD
Attorney General

KENT E. CATTANI
Chief Counsel
Capital Litigation Section

ROBERT L. ELLMAN
Assistant Attorney General
(Counsel of Record)

Attorneys for PETITIONER

CRM98–1524
114900

APPENDIX A

SUPREME COURT OF ARIZONA

STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. ARTURO ANDA CAÑEZ, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-98-0488-AP Pinal County Superior Court No. CR-96-021235 **SUPPLEMENTAL OPINION**

Appeal from the Superior Court in Pinal County
The Honorable Boyd T. Johnson, Judge

VACATED AND REMANDED

Janet A. Napolitano, Attorney General	Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel, Capital Litigation Section	
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General	
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General	
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General	
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General	Tucson
Attorneys for Appellee	
Thomas J. Phalen	Phoenix
and	
Tara K. Allen	Tempe
Attorneys for Appellant	

B E R C H, Justice

¶1 Arturo Anda Cañez was sentenced to death under a procedure found unconstitutional in *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584, 122 S. Ct. 2428 (2002) (*Ring II*). In *Ring II*, the Supreme Court held that Arizona's capital sentencing scheme violated the defendant's Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial. *Id.* at 609, 122 S. Ct. at 2443. In doing so, the Court held that defendants "are entitled to a jury determination of any fact on which the legislature conditions an increase in their maximum punishment." *Id.* at 589, 122 S. Ct. at 2432. The Court remanded the case for further proceedings consistent with its decision.

¶2 On remand, we consolidated all cases, including Cañez's, in which the death penalty had been imposed but the mandate had not yet issued from this court to determine whether *Ring II* required reversal or vacatur of the death sentences. *State v. Ring*, ___ Ariz. ___, ___, ¶¶ 5-6, 65 P.3d 915, 925 (2003) (*Ring III*). We concluded that we must review each death sentence imposed in these cases under Arizona's superseded capital sentencing statutes for harmless error. *Id.* at ___, ¶ 53, 65 P.3d at 936.

¶3 We now consider whether the death sentence imposed on Cañez can stand in light of *Ring II* and *Ring III*, as well as the Supreme Court's decision in *Atkins v. Virginia*, which held that the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution poses a constitutional bar to the execution of mentally retarded persons. 536 U.S. 304, 321, 122 S. Ct. 2242, 2252 (2002).

FACTS AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

¶4 On February 5, 1998, a jury found Arturo Anda Cañez guilty of felony murder, first degree burglary, and two counts of armed robbery. *State v. Cañez*, 202 Ariz. 133, 145, ¶ 15, 42 P.3d 564, 576 (2002). Following a sentencing hearing, the trial judge found that the State had proved the following four aggravating circumstances beyond

a reasonable doubt, rendering Cañez eligible to receive the death sentence: (1) Cañez had been convicted of four prior serious offenses, Ariz. Rev. Stat. ("A.R.S.") § 13-703(F)(2), (H)(1) (Supp. 1996); (2) the victim was at least seventy years old at the time of the crime, *id.* § 13-703(F)(9); (3) the murder was committed in expectation of pecuniary gain, *id.* § 13-703(F)(5); and (4) the offense was committed in an especially heinous, cruel, or depraved manner, *id.* § 13-703(F)(6). *Cañez*, 202 Ariz. at 157-62, ¶¶ 83-109, 42 P.3d at 588-93. The trial judge found that Cañez failed to prove the statutory mitigating circumstance of significant mental impairment, A.R.S. § 13-703(G)(1), and that "the cumulative effect of all of the mitigation offered by the defendant . . . [was] not sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." *Cañez*, 202 Ariz. at 162, 165, ¶¶ 111, 125, 42 P.3d at 593, 596. He therefore sentenced Cañez to death. We affirmed Cañez's conviction and death sentence on direct appeal. *Id.* at 165, ¶ 126, 42 P.3d at 596.

DISCUSSION

A. *Ring II* Error

¶5 In *Ring III*, we concluded that judicial fact-finding in the capital sentencing process may constitute harmless error if we can conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that no reasonable jury would fail to find the aggravating circumstance. ___ Ariz. at _, ¶¶ 53, 103, 65 P.3d at 936, 946. We now examine whether the *Ring II* error was harmless with respect to each of the aggravating circumstances found by the trial judge in Cañez's case.

1. Aggravating Circumstances

a. Prior Serious Convictions

¶6 Arizona law provides that a conviction for a prior serious offense constitutes an aggravating circumstance that renders a defendant eligible to receive the death penalty. A.R.S. § 13-703(F)(2). The trial judge found that the State had proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Cañez had four prior felony convictions. *Cañez*, 202 Ariz.

at 157, ¶ 84, 42 P.3d at 588. Cañez did not contest that these felonies qualify as serious offenses. *Id.* ¶ 83. In *Ring III*, we held that "the Sixth Amendment does not require a jury to determine prior convictions under sections 13-703.F.1 and F.2." ___ Ariz. at ___, ¶ 55, 65 P.3d at 936-37. Accordingly, we affirm the trial judge's finding that the State proved the aggravating circumstance of four prior serious felony convictions.

b. Elderly Victim

¶7 An aggravating circumstance exists if at the time the murder was committed, "the murdered person was . . . seventy years of age or older." A.R.S. § 13-703(F)(9). The trial judge found that the State proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the victim was at least seventy years old at the time the murder was committed. *Cañez*, 202 Ariz. at 158-59, ¶ 90, 42 P.3d at 589-90.

¶8 In *Ring III*, we held that *Ring II* error in the finding of the (F)(9) aggravator will be harmless if (1) the jury also convicted the defendant of an "age-dependent crime committed against the murder victim," *Ring III*, ___ Ariz. at ___, ¶ 86, 65 P.3d at 942; (2) the defendant stipulated to the victim's age; or (3) overwhelming evidence established the victim's age. *Id.*

¶9 The jury did not convict Cañez of an age-dependent crime, nor did Cañez stipulate to the victim's age. However, the evidence presented concerning the victim's age was overwhelming and uncontroverted. Cañez neither objected to nor controverted the testimony of the victim's son that the victim was born on June 26, 1918, nor did he contest that the crime was committed on February 22, 1996. This testimony was corroborated by a birth certificate, photographs of the victim's body, and testimony by the coroner that the autopsy results were consistent with the body of a 77-year-old man. Although Cañez objected to the admission of the victim's birth certificate on authentication grounds, that objection was overruled, and Cañez did not present any evidence that controverted the validity of the birth date contained on the document. Based on the foregoing, we

conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that no reasonable jury presented with this evidence could fail to find that the victim was more than seventy years old at the time of the crime. Therefore, the trial judge's finding that the State proved the (F)(9) aggravating factor beyond a reasonable doubt is harmless error.

c. Pecuniary Gain

¶10 The commission of an offense "in expectation of the receipt . . . of anything of pecuniary value" is an aggravating circumstance under Arizona law. A.R.S. § 13-703(F)(5). The finding of pecuniary gain "requires more than the jury's conviction of a defendant for first degree murder and robbery or burglary." *Ring III*, ___ Ariz. at ___, ¶ 78, 65 P.3d at 941. The State must also prove that the expectation of pecuniary gain was a "motive, cause, or impetus for the murder and not merely the result of the murder." *Id.* ¶ 77 (quoting *State v. Kayer*, 194 Ariz. 423, 433, ¶ 32, 984 P.2d 31, 41 (1999)). We cannot affirm the trial judge's pecuniary gain finding unless we are convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that no reasonable jury could fail to find that the State proved pecuniary gain beyond a reasonable doubt. *Id.* ¶ 79.

¶11 The trial judge found that "the offense was motivated by the desire for pecuniary gain," "the objective was the robbery of the victim," and "the death occurred in the course of and in furtherance of the defendant's efforts to obtain the victim's property." *Cañez*, 202 Ariz. at 159, ¶ 91, 42 P.3d at 590. The judge's findings were primarily based on the pretrial statements and trial testimony of Brian Patterson, a co-defendant, who had entered into a plea agreement with the State in exchange for his testimony. At trial, Patterson alternatively denied the validity of three separate and conflicting prior statements about the events on the night of the murder or stated that he could not recall making them.

¶12 The pecuniary gain finding rested heavily on the trial judge's assessment of Patterson's credibility and a determination of which portions of his testimony were true. We cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury considering Patterson's

testimony and pretrial statements in the context of determining whether Cañez's expectation of pecuniary gain was a motive, cause, or impetus for the murder, would accord them the same weight or come to the same conclusions as did the trial judge. Therefore, we conclude that the *Ring II* error as to the (F)(5) aggravating circumstance was not harmless.

d. Especially Heinous, Cruel, or Depraved

¶13 That a murder is committed in an especially heinous, cruel, or depraved manner is an aggravating factor under Arizona law. A.R.S. § 13-703(F)(6). The State must prove only one of these factors to establish the (F)(6) aggravating factor. *State v. Gretzler*, 135 Ariz. 42, 51, 659 P.2d 1, 10 (1983). The trial judge found the murder especially cruel, as well as heinous or depraved. *See Cañez*, 202 Ariz. at 160, ¶ 99, 42 P.3d at 591. On direct appeal we affirmed the finding that the murder was especially cruel, but found the evidence insufficient to support the findings of heinousness and depravity. *See id.* at 161-62, ¶¶ 104-09, 42 P.3d at 592-93. We therefore analyze only the cruelty factor.

¶14 The cruelty factor is established by proof that the manner of death caused the victim to suffer mental and physical anguish, *see Gretzler*, 135 Ariz. at 51, 659 P.2d at 10, "and the defendant knew or should have known that suffering would occur." *State v. Trostle*, 191 Ariz. 4, 18, 951 P.2d 869, 883 (1997) (citations omitted).

¶15 The trial judge based his cruelty finding on evidence that the victim was conscious when Cañez first stabbed him and remained at least partially conscious through the attempted strangulation and beating. Cañez argued that the evidence did not establish that the victim remained conscious during the attack. Indeed, the medical examiner testified that she could not determine the order in which the injuries were inflicted and that any of the ten blunt force injuries to the head could have resulted in immediate unconsciousness. We cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury hearing this evidence would necessarily conclude that the victim remained partially

conscious after the initial attack and therefore find the murder was cruel.

¶16 Because we cannot say, beyond a reasonable doubt, that a reasonable jury hearing the evidence would find that the murder was especially cruel, we conclude that the *Ring II* error was not harmless with respect to the (F)(6) aggravating factor.

2. Mitigating Circumstances

¶17 Our harmless error inquiry does not end with an examination of the aggravating circumstances. Because we can affirm a capital sentence only if we can conclude beyond a reasonable doubt "that no rational trier of fact would determine that the mitigating circumstances were sufficiently substantial to call for leniency," we must also consider whether reversible error occurred with respect to the mitigating circumstances. *Ring III*, ___ Ariz. at ___, ¶ 104, 65 P.3d at 946.

a. Statutory Mitigation

¶18 It is a statutory mitigating factor that a "defendant's capacity to appreciate the wrongfulness of his conduct or to conform his conduct to the requirements of law was significantly impaired." A.R.S. § 13-703(G)(1). Cañez sought to establish the (G)(1) factor by demonstrating that he was mentally retarded, was on medication for seizures, suffered a depressive disorder, exhibited symptoms of brain damage, was a drug addict, and was intoxicated at the time of the offense. *Cañez*, 202 Ariz. at 162, ¶ 111, 42 P.3d at 593.

¶19 Cañez presented evidence that his full-scale IQ was 70, placing him on the borderline of mental retardation. However, three psychological experts offered conflicting testimony concerning Cañez's adaptive abilities. Cañez's first expert, Dr. Tatro, testified that Cañez had "borderline personality disorder with antisocial features, intermittent explosive personality disorder, depressive disorder recurrent, and possible organic brain syndrome." *Id.* at 163, ¶ 113, 42 P.3d at 594. Cañez's second expert, Dr. Blackwood, found some

indication of organic brain damage, but suggested that Cañez may not have been trying to do well on the tests. *Id.* The State's expert, Dr. Youngjohn, testified that he found no evidence of mental illness or brain damage, but diagnosed antisocial personality disorder and psychopathic personality disorder. *Id.* The trial judge accorded more weight to the State's expert and concluded that Cañez failed to prove he was significantly impaired for purposes of mitigation. *Id.* ¶ 114.

¶20 On direct appeal, we noted that the evidence of brain damage, mental illness, and retardation was conflicting. *Id.* ¶ 113. Nevertheless, we upheld the trial court's finding that Cañez failed to establish the (G)(1) factor because we accorded great deference to the trial judge's conclusions concerning the weight to be given to the various expert testimony. *Id.* ¶ 114. Because this finding rests so heavily on the trial judge's assessment of witness credibility, we cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury would necessarily also conclude that Cañez failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence the (G)(1) statutory mitigator.

b. Non-Statutory Mitigation

¶21 Cañez offered evidence on several non-statutory mitigating factors at the sentencing hearing. *Id.* at 163-65, ¶¶ 115-25, 42 P.3d at 594-96. The trial judge found, and we affirmed on direct appeal, that Cañez had proved by a preponderance of the evidence the following non-statutory mitigating factors: drug and alcohol use, felony murder, his love of family, and mental illness or impairment. *Id.* at 163-64, ¶¶ 116-17, 120-22, 42 P.3d at 594-95. The trial judge also found, and we affirmed, that Cañez failed to prove the non-statutory mitigating factors of good character, traumatic childhood and dysfunctional family, and disparate sentence of a co-defendant. *Id.* at 164-65, ¶¶ 118-19, 124, 42 P.3d at 595-96. We also concluded that the cumulative effect of all the mitigation was not sufficiently substantial to call for leniency. *Id.* at 165, ¶ 126, 42 P.3d at 596.

¶22 After reviewing the evidence, we cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury would not have found that

Cañez proved some of the mitigating factors that the trial judge found were not proven. Furthermore, we cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury would not have weighed differently the aggravating or mitigating factors that were found or determined that the mitigating factors were "sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." A.R.S. § 13-703(E). Therefore, we conclude that the *Ring II* error was not harmless in this case. Accordingly, for this reason as well, we vacate Cañez's death sentence because of the *Ring II* error and remand for resentencing as discussed more fully below.

B. Mental Retardation as an Absolute Bar to Execution

¶23 Our inquiry is not yet complete. While Cañez's case remained on direct appeal, the Supreme Court announced that the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution "'places a substantive restriction on the State's power to take the life' of a mentally retarded offender." *Atkins v. Virginia*, 536 U.S. 304, 321, 122 S. Ct. 2242, 2252 (2002) (quoting *Ford v. Wainright*, 477 U.S. 399, 405, 106 S. Ct. 2595, 2599 (1986)). Furthermore, in 2001, shortly before the decision in *Atkins* was announced, the Arizona legislature enacted a statute barring the imposition of the death sentence on mentally retarded persons.[1] A.R.S. § 13-703.02 (Supp. 2002). We now consider the impact of these events on Cañez's case.

¶24 In *Atkins*, the Court gave some guidance regarding how to determine whether a defendant has mental retardation. The Court noted that "clinical definitions of mental retardation require not only subaverage intellectual functioning, but also significant limitations in adaptive skills such as communication, self-care, and self-direction that became manifest before age 18." *Atkins*, 536 U.S. at 318, 122 S. Ct. at

---

1. We note that as originally written, § 13-703.02 applied only prospectively to cases in which the State filed its notice of intent to seek the death penalty after the effective date of the statute. However, the statute was amended in 2002 to apply to all capital sentencing proceedings, including resentencing proceedings. *See* A.R.S. § 13-703.02(J); 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 4.

2250. An IQ below 70-75 indicates subaverage intellectual functioning. *Id.* at 309 nn.3 & 5, 122 S. Ct. at 2245 nn.3 & 5.

¶25 We addressed the application of the standards set forth in *Atkins* to our death penalty cases in *State v. Grell*, ___ Ariz. ___, 66 P.3d 1234 (2003). Like Cañez, Grell was sentenced to death after the trial judge found that he had failed to establish that he had mental retardation. *Id.* at ___, ¶ 27, 66 P.3d at 1238. We noted in *Grell* that because Grell was sentenced before the Supreme Court's decision in *Atkins*, the trial judge had considered the mental retardation evidence from the perspective that such evidence might establish a statutory mitigating factor calling for leniency in sentencing, not from the perspective that such evidence might establish an absolute bar to execution. *Id.* at ___, ¶ 37, 66 P.3d at 1240. We concluded that the *Atkins* decision prohibiting the execution of mentally retarded offenders as well as Arizona's new statute barring the imposition of the death penalty on mentally retarded offenders had "so changed the landscape of death penalty jurisprudence that the trial court simply could not have applied the correct principles during sentencing." *Id.* ¶¶ 37-38. As a consequence, we held that due process required that Grell's case be remanded for an *Atkins* hearing to determine whether Grell has mental retardation. *See id.* ¶ 41.

¶26 As discussed above, the evidence presented at Cañez's sentencing established that his full-scale IQ was 70, placing him squarely within *Atkins'* definition of subaverage intellectual functioning.[2] Additional evidence established that Cañez attended special education classes during grade school, demonstrating that any subaverage mental abilities may have manifested before age 18. Most important, however, is the fact that the evidence concerning Cañez's

---

2. The Arizona legislature has adopted a definition of mental retardation very similar to that set forth in the DSM-IV, which requires proof of "(1) significantly subaverage intellectual functioning (IQ of 70 or below), (2) concurrent deficits or impairments in present adaptive functioning in at least two of eleven areas, and (3) onset before the age of 18." *Grell*, ___ Ariz. at ___, ¶ 30, 66 P.3d at 1239 (describing application of the DSM-IV) (footnote omitted); A.R.S. § 13-703.02(K).

mental abilities was considered only from the viewpoint of establishing mitigation, not as a potential bar to execution.

¶27 Due process demands that Cañez receive a hearing at which the court considers the mental retardation evidence under the constitutional principles announced in *Atkins* and the statutory standards set forth in A.R.S. § 13-703.02. We remand to the trial court to determine whether Cañez has mental retardation and therefore is ineligible to receive the death penalty. In making this determination, the trial court should follow the principles announced in *Atkins* and the procedures set forth in A.R.S. § 13-703.02, to the extent possible given the post-trial posture of this case. If the court determines that Cañez has mental retardation, the court shall resentence Cañez to life or natural life in prison. *See id.* § 13-703.02(A). If the court determines that Cañez does not have mental retardation, the court shall conduct a resentencing hearing before a jury, according to the procedures set forth in A.R.S. § 13-703.01 (Supp. 2002).

CONCLUSION

¶28 We vacate Cañez's death sentence and remand this case for resentencing and for a determination of whether Cañez has mental retardation and is therefore ineligible for the death penalty. If the court determines that Cañez suffers from mental retardation, the court shall enter a lawful sentence pursuant to A.R.S. §§ 13-703 to -703.02. If the court determines that Cañez does not have mental retardation, the court shall conduct a jury resentencing pursuant to A.R.S. §§ 13-703 to -703.01.

_____

Rebecca White Berch, Justice

CONCURRING:

_____

Ruth V. McGregor, Vice Chief Justice

_____

Michael D. Ryan, Justice

J O N E S, C.J., concurring in part, dissenting in part:

¶29 I concur in Section B of the opinion and the result, but respectfully dissent from the majority's conclusion that harmless error analysis is appropriate where sentencing determinations are made by the trial judge in the absence of the jury. The right to trial by an impartial jury is fundamental. The sentencing phase is, of itself, a life or death matter. Where a judge, not a jury, determines all questions pertaining to sentencing, I believe a violation of the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States has occurred. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision in *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584, 122 S. Ct. 2428 (2002) (*Ring II*), the absence of the jury in the sentencing phase of a capital trial necessarily amounts to structural error. I would remand the case for resentencing, simply on the basis of the Sixth Amendment violation. *See State v. Ring*, ___ Ariz. ___, ___ ¶¶ 105-14, 65 P.3d 915, 946-48 (2003) (Feldman, J., concurring in part, dissenting in part) (*Ring III*).

Charles E. Jones, Chief Justice

APPENDIX B

[Filed April 3, 2003]

SUPREME COURT OF ARIZONA
En Banc

STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. TIMOTHY STUART RING, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-97-0428-AP Maricopa County Superior Court No. CR-95-01754(A) CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. ANTOIN JONES, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-99-0536-AP Maricopa County Superior Court No. CR-96-04691 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. DANNY N. MONTAÑO, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-99-0439-AP Pima County Superior Court No. CR-58016 CONSOLIDATED WITH

STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. WAYNE BENOIT PRINCE, Appellant.	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-00-0328-AP Maricopa County Superior Court No. CR 98-04885 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. MICHAEL GENE BLAKLEY, Appellant.	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-00-0360-AP Mohave County Superior Court No. CR-98-838 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. HENRY WILLIAM HALL, Appellant.	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-00-0447-AP Maricopa County Superior Court No. CR1997-011695 CONSOLIDATED WITH

STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. SHAWN RYAN GRELL, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-01-0275-AP Maricopa County Superior Court No. CR1999-095294 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. JAMES EDWARD DAVOLT, II, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-00-0508-AP Mohave County Superior Court No. CR-98-1243 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. LEROY D. CROPPER, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-00-0544-AP Maricopa County Superior Court No. CR97-03949 CONSOLIDATED WITH

STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. SHAD DANIEL ARMSTRONG, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-00-0595-AP Pima County Superior Court No. CR-61846 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. EUGENE ROBERT TUCKER, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-01-0091-AP Maricopa County Superior Court No. CR1999-015293 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. KAJORNSAK PRASERTPHONG, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-01-0100-AP Pima County Superior Court No. CR-64663 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-01-0103-AP

Appellee,	)	
	)	Pima County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-64663
CHRISTOPHER BO HUERSTEL,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-01-0129-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR1997-05555
SHERMAN LEE RUTLEDGE,	)	
	)	
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-01-0270-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR1996-011714
CHRISTOPHER GEORGE THEODORE LAMAR,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-01-0421-AP

Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR1995-006472
MICHAEL JOE MURDAUGH (A),	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-02-0042-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-1999-003536
BRIAN JEFFREY DANN,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-02-0044-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Pima County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-43804
ROBERT JOE MOODY,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-99-0296-AP
Appellee,	)	

	)	Pima County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-61452
KEITH ROYAL PHILLIPS,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-99-0551-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Pima County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-61452
MARCUS LASALLE FINCH,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-99-0438-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-98-003520
JOHN EDWARD SANSING,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-98-0289-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior

v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-95-09046
JAMES CORNELL HARROD,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-98-0376-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR-93-08116
DARREL PETER PANDELI aka	)	
DARREL PETER FLORIAN,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-97-0317-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Maricopa County Superior
v.	)	Court
	)	No. CR 92-05731
SCOTT ALAN LEHR,	)	
	)	CONSOLIDATED WITH
Appellant.	)	
	)	
	)	
STATE OF ARIZONA,	)	Arizona Supreme Court
	)	No. CR-98-0488-AP
Appellee,	)	
	)	Pinal County Superior
v.	)	Court

ARTURO ANDA CAÑEZ, Appellant.	)	No. CR-96-021235 CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. AARON SCOTT HOSKINS, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-97-0349-AP Maricopa County Superior Court Nos. CR-94-11396 and CR-94-11397 (Consolidated) CONSOLIDATED WITH
STATE OF ARIZONA, Appellee, v. SCOTT DOUGLAS NORDSTROM, Appellant.	)	Arizona Supreme Court No. CR-98-0278-AP Pima County Superior Court No. CR-55947 **OPINION**

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR-95-01754(A)
The Honorable Gregory H. Martin, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix

by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Osborn Maledon, P.A. Phoenix
by Andrew D. Hurwitz
and John A. Stookey
and Daniel L. Kaplan
Attorneys for Timothy Stuart Ring

Drinker Biddle & Reath, L.L.P. Philadelphia
by Lawrence J. Fox
and
Quarles & Brady Streich Lang, L.L.P. Phoenix
by Edward F. Novak
Attorneys for *Amici Curiae* Legal Ethicists and
The Stein Center for Law and Ethics

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR-96-04691
The Honorable Stephen A. Gerst, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

James J. Haas, Maricopa County Public Defender — Phoenix
by Stephen R. Collins
and Edward F. McGee
Attorneys for Antoin Jones

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-58016
The Honorable Deborah J. S. Ward, Judge Pro Tempore

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Law Offices of Carla Ryan — Tucson
by Carla Ryan
Attorneys for Danny N. Montaño

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR 98-04885
The Honorable Michael R. McVey, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson

Attorneys for State of Arizona

James J. Haas, Maricopa County Public Defender — Phoenix
by James L. Edgar
and Charles R. Krull
Attorneys for Wayne Benoit Prince

Appeal from the Superior Court of Mohave County
No. CR-98-838
The Honorable Steven F. Conn, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Baran Law Office, Ltd. — Overgaard
by J. Conrad Baran
Attorney for Michael Gene Blakley

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR1997-011695
The Honorable Thomas W. O'Toole, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General

and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Thomas A. Gorman Flagstaff
Attorney for Henry William Hall

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR1999-095294
The Honorable Barbara M. Jarrett, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Shughart Thomson Kilroy Goodwin Raup, P.C. Phoenix
by Rudolph J. Gerber
and
James J. Haas, Maricopa County Public Defender Phoenix
by James R. Rummage
and Lawrence S. Matthew
Attorneys for Shawn Ryan Grell

Appeal from the Superior Court of Mohave County
No. CR-98-1243
The Honorable Steven F. Conn, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix

by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Julie Hall Tucson
and
Arizona Capital Representation Project Tucson
by Jennifer Bedier
Attorneys for James Edward Davolt, II

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR97-03949
The Honorable David R. Cole, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Thomas A. Gorman Flagstaff
and
David I. Goldberg Flagstaff
Attorneys for Leroy D. Cropper

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-61846

The Honorable Howard Hantman, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Law Offices of Harriette P. Levitt — Tucson
by Harriette P. Levitt
Attorneys for Shad Daniel Armstrong

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR1999-015293
The Honorable Michael D. Jones, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

James J. Haas, Maricopa County Public Defender — Phoenix
by Christopher V. Johns
and James H. Kemper
Attorneys for Eugene Robert Tucker

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-64663
The Honorable Michael Brown, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Susan A. Kettlewell, Pima County Public Defender — Tucson
by Rebecca A. McLean
and Lori J. Lefferts
Attorneys for Kajornsak Prasertphong

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-64663
The Honorable Michael Brown, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Law Offices of Williamson & Young, P.C. — Tucson
by S. Jonathan Young
Attorney for Christopher Bo Huerstel

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR1997-05555
The Honorable Frank T. Galati, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Robert Doyle — Phoenix
Attorney for Sherman Lee Rutledge

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR1996-011714
The Honorable Stephen A. Gerst, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Susan Sherwin, Maricopa County
Office of Legal Advocate — Phoenix
by Brent Graham
Attorneys for Christopher George Theodore Lamar

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR1995-006472
The Honorable Sherry Hutt, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Michael S. Reeves — Phoenix
Attorney for Michael Joe Murdaugh

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR 1999-003536
The Honorable H. Jeffrey Coker, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Susan Sherwin, Maricopa County
Office of Legal Advocate — Phoenix
by Brent Graham
and

Shughart Thomson Kilroy Goodwin Raup, P.C. Phoenix
by Rudolph J. Gerber
Attorneys for Brian Jeffrey Dann

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-43804
The Honorable Michael Cruikshank, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Susan A. Kettlewell, Pima County Public Defender Tucson
by Frank P. Leto
and Brian X. Metcalf
Attorneys for Robert Joe Moody

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-61452
The Honorable Bernardo P. Velasco, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson

Attorneys for State of Arizona

Susan A. Kettlewell, Pima County Public Defender — Tucson
by John F. Palumbo
and Rebecca A. McLean
Attorneys for Keith Royal Phillips

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-61452
The Honorable Bernardo P. Velasco, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Law Offices of Williamson & Young, P.C. — Tucson
by S. Jonathan Young
Attorneys for Marcus LaSalle Finch

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR 98-003520
The Honorable Ronald S. Reinstein, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General

and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

James J. Haas, Maricopa County Public Defender Phoenix
by Terry J. Adams
and Spencer D. Heffel
Attorneys for John Edward Sansing

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR-95-09046
The Honorable Ronald S. Reinstein, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

James J. Haas, Maricopa County Public Defender Phoenix
by Christopher V. Johns
and James H. Kemper
Attorneys for James Cornell Harrod

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR-93-08116
The Honorable Gregory H. Martin, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,

Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Julie Hall Tucson
and
Arizona Capital Representation Project Tucson
by Jennifer Bedier
Attorneys for Darrel Peter Pandeli aka
Darrel Peter Florian

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
No. CR 92-05731
The Honorable Stephen A. Gerst, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel,
Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Stephen M. Johnson Phoenix
Attorney for Scott Alan Lehr

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pinal County
No. CR-96-021235
The Honorable Boyd T. Johnson, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel, Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Thomas J. Phalen — Phoenix
and
Tara K. Allen — Tempe
Attorneys for Arturo Anda Cañez

Appeal from the Superior Court of Maricopa County
Nos. CR-94-11396 and CR-94-11397 (Consolidated)
The Honorable Jeffrey A. Hotham, Judge

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel, Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Denise Young — Tucson
and
Arizona Capital Representation Project — Tucson
by Jennifer Bedier
Attorneys for Aaron Scott Hoskins

Appeal from the Superior Court of Pima County
No. CR-55947
The Honorable Michael Cruikshank, Judge Pro Tempore

Janet A. Napolitano, Arizona Attorney General — Phoenix
by Kent E. Cattani, Chief Counsel, Capital Litigation Section
and Robert L. Ellman, Assistant Attorney General
and James P. Beene, Assistant Attorney General
and John P. Todd, Assistant Attorney General
and Bruce M. Ferg, Assistant Attorney General — Tucson
Attorneys for State of Arizona

Law Office of David Alan Darby — Tucson
by David Alan Darby
Attorney for Scott Douglas Nordstrom

M c G R E G O R, Vice Chief Justice

¶1 This case comes to us on remand from the United States Supreme Court, *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584, ___, 122 S. Ct. 2428, 2443 (2002) (*Ring II*). We have jurisdiction pursuant to the Arizona Constitution, Article VI, Section 5.3.

I.
Facts and Procedural History.

¶2 On December 6, 1996, a jury convicted Timothy Stuart Ring of first degree murder, conspiracy to commit armed robbery, armed robbery, burglary and theft. Under Arizona law at the time of Ring's sentencing, capital sentencing followed the procedure set forth at Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) section 13-703 (Supp. 1996). As required by A.R.S. section 13-703.B, the trial court conducted a sentencing hearing to consider aggravating and mitigating circumstances. The court could consider only those aggravating factors

identified by statute, but could consider any possible mitigating factor.[1] A.R.S. § 13-703.F–.G, *amended by* 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 1. After the hearing, the court found two aggravating factors: Ring committed the murder for pecuniary gain, A.R.S. section 13-703.F.5, and "in an especially heinous, cruel or depraved manner," A.R.S. section 13-703.F.6. *State v. Ring*, 200 Ariz. 267, 272 ¶ 13, 25 P.3d 1139, 1144 (2001) (*Ring I*). The trial court concluded that the mitigating circumstance of Ring's minimal criminal record was not "sufficiently substantial to call for leniency" and sentenced Ring to death. *Id.* at 273 ¶ 13, 25 P.3d at 1145; *see* A.R.S. § 13-703.E, *amended by* 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 1.

¶3 Ring subsequently filed a direct appeal to this court seeking review of multiple trial and sentencing issues, including a Sixth Amendment challenge to Arizona's capital sentencing procedure. The Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial, Ring argued, requires a jury, rather than a judge, to find the aggravating factors set forth at section 13-703.F. *Ring I,* 200 Ariz. at 278 ¶ 40, 25 P.3d at 1150. This court affirmed Ring's first degree murder conviction and death sentence. *Id.* at 284 ¶ 65, 25 P.3d at 1156. Guided by the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Walton v. Arizona*, 497 U.S. 639, 110 S. Ct. 3047 (1990), we held Arizona's capital sentencing procedure did not violate the Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution. *Ring I*, 200 Ariz. at 279-80 ¶ 44, 25 P.3d at 1151-52.

---

[1] The state must prove aggravating factors beyond a reasonable doubt. A.R.S. § 13-703.B (Supp. 2002); *State v. Spreitz*, 190 Ariz. 129, 147, 945 P.2d 1260, 1278 (1997). Mitigating factors must be proved by a preponderance of the evidence. A.R.S. § 13-703.C; *State v. Pandeli*, 200 Ariz. 365, 376 ¶ 44, 26 P.3d 1136, 1147 (2001). Except for one brief period, aggravating circumstances have been codified at A.R.S. section 13-703.F since the legislature enacted judge-based sentencing. Following the 2001 Arizona Legislative Session, these aggravating circumstances are listed under A.R.S. section 13-703.G. 2001 Ariz. Sess. Laws ch. 260, § 1. The legislature redesignated aggravating circumstances under subsection .F in its post-*Ring II* amendments. 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 1.

¶4 Ring petitioned the United States Supreme Court to accept *certiorari*. The Court granted review and held that Arizona's capital sentencing scheme violated the Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial, overruling *Walton* and applying the approach of *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466, 120 S. Ct. 2348 (2000). *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 2443. The Supreme Court remanded the matter for disposition in light of *Ring II*.

¶5 At the time of the *Ring II* decision, thirty-one defendants sentenced to death had matters pending on direct appeal before this court. On June 27, 2002, we entered an order consolidating all thirty-one death penalty cases then on direct appeal. *State v. Ring*, Order No. CR-97-0428-AP (June 27, 2002).

¶6 All defendants in this consolidated case either pled guilty to or were convicted by a jury of first degree premeditated or felony murder. Trial judges sentenced all defendants to death under a now-superseded version of A.R.S. section 13-703, under which a judge considered aggravating and mitigating evidence. This court must now examine the impact of *Ring II* on the death sentences of those defendants before us. To assist the court, and after consultation with counsel for the State and the defendants, we ordered the parties to brief the issues discussed below. We reserved to each defendant the right to further brief sentencing issues, if necessary. This opinion addresses those issues raised in the consolidated appeal. The court will address each defendant's sentencing issues in a separate opinion.

II.

Historical Overview of Capital Punishment in Arizona.

¶7 Under Arizona's first penal code, a person convicted of first degree murder received either a death or prison sentence.[2] Revised

---

[2] In addition to first degree murder, offenses punishable by death included treason, Revised Statutes of Arizona, Penal Code section 33 (1913), train robbery, *id.*
(continued...)

Statutes of Arizona, Penal Code § 173 (1913). The jury, exercising its discretion, decided which punishment to impose. *Id.* In 1918, voters approved an initiative measure giving the trial judge authority to sentence a person to death for first degree murder in cases in which the defendant pled guilty. 1919 Ariz. Sess. Laws, Initiative & Referendum Measures 17, 18. In those cases, the trial court exercised the same discretion as did a jury. Thus, until the early 1970s, Arizona imposed the death penalty for first degree murder at the sole discretion of the jury or court. *E.g.,* Ariz. Code § 43-2903 (1939); Ariz. Code § 4585 (1928); *State v. McGee*, 91 Ariz. 101, 111-12, 370 P.2d 261, 268 (1962) ("The determination of punishment is wholly within the discretion of the jury upon their consideration of all aspects of the case."), *superseded by statute as stated in State v. Lopez*, 163 Ariz. 108, 115, 786 P.2d 959, 966 (1990); *Hernandez v. State*, 43 Ariz. 424, 429, 32 P.2d 18, 20 (1934) ("[T]he question of punishment in first degree murder cases is wholly within the jury's discretion . .. ."). No statutory standards guided the determination of punishment.

¶8 In 1972, however, the United States Supreme Court decided *Furman v. Georgia* and held that standardless death sentencing procedures violate the Eighth Amendment's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment. 408 U.S. 238, 239-40, 92 S. Ct. 2726, 2727 (1972) (per curiam). According to Justice Stewart, complete jury discretion led to arbitrary and capricious imposition of the death sentence; given strikingly similar crimes, some defendants received a death sentence and others did not. *Id.* at 309-10, 92 S. Ct. at 2762 (Stewart, J., concurring).

¶9 Following the *Furman* decision, the Arizona Legislature enacted a new capital sentencing scheme. 1973 Ariz. Sess. Laws ch. 138. The legislation divided a capital first degree murder trial into two phases: a guilt phase and a sentencing phase. Upon a jury conviction of or a guilty plea to first degree murder, the statutes required the trial court to

---

(...continued)
sections 435, 438, and deadly assault by a felon serving a life sentence, *id.* section 220.

hold a sentencing hearing at which the state and defendant presented evidence of statutorily defined aggravating and mitigating factors.[3] *Id.* § 5. The trial court could impose the death sentence if it found at least one aggravating circumstance and "no mitigating circumstances sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." *Id.*

¶10 Three years later, in *Gregg v. Georgia*, the Supreme Court upheld Georgia's revised sentencing scheme against a claim that the death penalty was *per se* unconstitutional. 428 U.S. 153, 169, 96 S. Ct. 2909, 2923 (1976). The Georgia statute resembled Arizona's, except that, under Georgia law, the same jury heard both the guilt and sentencing phases. *See id.* at 164 & n.9, 96 S. Ct. at 2921 & n.9.

¶11 The Supreme Court reviewed Arizona's judge-only sentencing in *Walton*. The Court rejected an argument that the Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial required a jury, not a judge, to find the facts presented at the sentencing hearing. *Walton*, 497 U.S. at 649, 110 S. Ct. at 3055. In *Apprendi*, a non-capital case decided ten years later, the Court held that "[o]ther than the fact of a prior conviction, any fact that increases the penalty for a crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum must be submitted to a jury, and proved beyond a reasonable doubt." 530 U.S. at 490, 120 S. Ct. at 2362-63. Although Justice O'Connor's *Apprendi* dissent questioned whether *Walton* could survive the *Apprendi* ruling, *id.* at 537, 120 S. Ct. at 2387-88 (O'Connor, J., dissenting), the majority distinguished capital cases as "not controlling" authority. *Id.* at 496-97, 120 S. Ct. at 2366.

¶12 Finaly, in *Ring II*, the Supreme Court expressly overruled *Walton* in favor of *Apprendi*'s Sixth Amendment approach. 536 U.S.

---

[3] In 1978, the Supreme Court held unconstitutional those death penalty sentencing statutes limiting the types of mitigating evidence a defendant can introduce. *Lockett v. Ohio*, 438 U.S. 586, 604, 98 S. Ct. 2954, 2964-65 (1978); *Bell v. Ohio*, 438 U.S. 637, 642, 98 S. Ct. 2977, 2980-81 (1978). This court subsequently held unconstitutional Arizona's exclusion of nonstatutory mitigating circumstances. *State v. Watson*, 120 Ariz. 441, 445, 586 P.2d 1253, 1257 (1978). In 1979, the Arizona Legislature amended the mitigating circumstances statute to conform with these decisions. 1979 Ariz. Sess. Laws ch. 144, § 1.

at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 2443. According to the Court, "[b]ecause Arizona's enumerated aggravating factors operate as the functional equivalent of an element of a greater offense, the Sixth Amendment requires that they be found by a jury." *Id.* (quoting *Apprendi*, 530 U.S. at 494 n.19, 120 S. Ct. at 2365 n.19). "Capital defendants, no less than non-capital defendants," the Court concluded, "are entitled to a jury determination of any fact on which the legislature conditions an increase in their maximum punishment." *Id.* at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 2432. Thus, any fact necessary to enhance the defendant's sentence beyond that authorized by the jury's guilty verdict must be found by the jury.

¶13 Following the Supreme Court's announcement of the *Ring II* decision, Governor Jane Dee Hull called a special legislative session to revise Arizona's capital sentencing provisions. On August 1, 2002, the legislature passed and Governor Hull signed into law Senate Bill ("S.B.") 1001, containing several revisions intended to conform Arizona law to the *Ring II* mandate. S.B. 1001, 45th Leg., 5th Spec. Sess. (Ariz. 2002). Under Arizona's amended sentencing procedure, the jury serving during the guilt phase of the trial also serves as the trier of fact during the sentencing phase. A.R.S. § 13-703.01.C–.D (Supp. 2002). Specifically, the jury will find and consider the effect of aggravating and mitigating circumstances and decide whether the defendant should receive a sentence of death. *Id.* § 13-703.01.D.

¶14 To determine whether we should vacate defendants' death sentences and either reduce to a life sentence or remand for resentencing under Arizona's revised procedure, we consider the following issues.

III.

Does the Ex Post Facto Clause Prohibit Resentencing Under Arizona's Amended Capital Sentencing Procedure?

¶15 The defendants argue that resentencing under A.R.S. sections 13-703 and 13-703.01 (Supp. 2002) (the new sentencing statutes) would constitute an ex post facto violation under the United States

Constitution, Article I, Section 10, Clause 1, and the Arizona Constitution, Article II, Section 25. We disagree.[4]

¶16 The ex post facto doctrine prohibits a state from "retroactively alter[ing] the definition of crimes or increas[ing] the punishment for criminal acts." *Collins v. Youngblood*, 497 U.S. 37, 43, 110 S. Ct. 2715, 2719 (1990). In *Dobbert v. Florida*, the Supreme Court held that ex post facto prohibitions reach only those legislative enactments that affect substantive criminal law. 432 U.S. 282, 292, 97 S. Ct. 2290, 2298 (1977). Likewise, we recently held that, under the United States and Arizona Constitutions, "[a]n *ex post facto* law is one that increases the punishment or aggravates any crime previously committed." *Zuther v. State*, 199 Ariz. 104, 111 ¶ 26, 14 P.3d 295, 302 (2000) (holding legislative amendment changing statutory computation of prisoner "gate money" not an ex post facto law because legislative purpose was not punitive).

¶17 In *Dobbert*, the Supreme Court restated the categories of laws constituting substantive changes to criminal law:

> [A]ny statute which punishes as a crime an act previously committed, which was innocent when done; which makes more burdensome the punishment for a crime, after its commission, or which deprives one charged with crime of any defense available according to law at the time when the act was committed, is prohibited as *ex post facto*.

432 U.S. at 292, 97 S. Ct. at 2298 (quoting *Beazell v. Ohio*, 269 U.S. 167, 169-70, 46 S. Ct. 68, 68 (1925)). Thus, a legislative act affecting changes in criminal procedure, including procedural changes that disadvantage a defendant, generally does not violate the Ex Post Facto Clause. *Collins*, 497 U.S. at 45, 110 S. Ct. at 2720 ("[Procedural] refers

---

[4] In *State v. Noble*, we held that we will interpret the state Ex Post Facto Clause in accord with federal precedent. 171 Ariz. 171, 173, 829 P.2d 1217, 1219 (1992). We find no reason to deviate from *Noble*.

to changes in the procedures by which a criminal case is adjudicated, as opposed to changes in the substantive law of crimes."); *State v. Mendoza*, 170 Ariz. 184, 193, 823 P.2d 51, 60 (1992) ("A defendant has no vested right in any particular mode of procedure.").

¶18 The question before us, then, is whether Arizona's new sentencing statutes worked a substantive or procedural change in the law as it existed when these murders took place. We regard three decisions as particularly instructive.

¶19 In *Dobbert*, the defendant argued that his death sentence violated the Ex Post Facto Clause. Dobbert killed his children in 1972. At that time, Florida mandated a death sentence for capital felony convictions unless the jury, in its discretion, recommended mercy to the judge. *Dobbert*, 432 U.S. at 287, 97 S. Ct. at 2295. Shortly after Dobbert murdered his children, the Supreme Court decided *Furman v. Georgia*, striking down the Georgia death sentencing statute as unconstitutional.

Id. at 288, 97 S. Ct. at 2296. A month later, in *Donaldson v. Sack*, the Florida Supreme Court held the Florida death sentencing statute unconstitutional under *Furman*. 265 So. 2d 499, 501 (Fla. 1972). Later that year, the Florida Legislature amended the state's capital sentencing procedure to comply with *Furman* and *Donaldson*. *Dobbert*, 432 U.S. at 288, 97 S. Ct. at 2296. Dobbert was then tried and sentenced to death under the state's new law. *Id.* at 284, 97 S. Ct. at 2294.

¶20 Dobbert failed to persuade the Supreme Court that sentencing him under the amended procedures violated the Ex Post Facto Clause. The Court first limited ex post facto violations to those occurring when a statute makes criminal a previously innocent act, aggravates a crime previously committed, provides greater punishment, or changes the quantum of proof needed to convict a defendant. *Id.* at 292, 97 S. Ct. at 2298 (quoting *Beazell*, 269 U.S. at 169-70, 46 S. Ct. at 68). None of those categories applied to the Florida statute. Instead, the Court concluded, the statutory change between the two sentencing methods was "clearly procedural," and "[t]he new statute simply altered the

methods employed in determining whether the death penalty was to be imposed; there was no change in the quantum of punishment attached to the crime." *Id.* at 293-94, 97 S. Ct. at 2298.

¶21 The Supreme Court also rejected an Ex Post Facto Clause challenge in *Collins v. Youngblood*, a non-death penalty case. The jury had imposed a prison sentence and a fine, the latter not authorized by law. 497 U.S. at 39, 110 S. Ct. at 2717. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals reformed the sentence under a statute enacted after the defendant's criminal act took place. *Id.* at 40, 110 S. Ct. at 2718. The Supreme Court held that applying the sentence reform statute in the defendant's case did not violate the Ex Post Facto Clause because although the Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial is substantial, "it is not a right that has anything to do with the definition of crimes, defenses, or punishments." *Id.* at 51-52, 110 S. Ct. at 2724 (overruling *Thompson v. Utah*, 170 U.S. 343, 18 S. Ct. 620 (1898)).

¶22 In *State v. Correll*, in contrast, we found a violation of the Ex Post Facto Clause. 148 Ariz. 468, 482, 715 P.2d 721, 735 (1986), *rev'd in part on other grounds by Correll v. Stewart*, 137 F.3d 1404 (9th Cir. 1998). A jury convicted the defendant of three counts of first degree murder. After the murders, but before sentencing, the legislature amended A.R.S. section 13-703.F to add multiple homicide convictions as an aggravating circumstance. We held that retroactively applying the new aggravating circumstance constituted a substantive change to capital murder and disadvantaged the defendant. *Id.* This change affected the substantive nature of the crime and sentencing by adding a new element that, if present, permitted the defendant to receive a more severe punishment than that available at the time of the crime.[5]

¶23 These cases clearly indicate not only that ex post facto principles generally do not bar applying procedural changes to criminal proceedings, but also that the general framework of a state's statutory

---

[5] The Supreme Court's holding that aggravating factors serve as the functional equivalent of elements of the first degree murder offense makes this conclusion even more evident. *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 2443.

capital sentencing scheme is procedural in nature. As *Collins* established, rights secured by the Sixth Amendment jury trial right, the right at issue here, are inherently procedural. 497 U.S. at 51, 110 S. Ct. at 2724. Under the holding of *Dobbert*, Arizona's change in the statutory method for imposing capital punishment is clearly procedural: The new sentencing statutes alter the method used to determine whether the death penalty will be imposed but make no change to the punishment attached to first degree murder. The new sentencing statutes added no new element, or functional equivalent of an element, to first degree murder.[6] *Correll*, 148 Ariz. at 481-82, 715 P.2d at 734-35. Hence, the changes to the state's capital sentencing procedures do not resemble the type of after-the-fact legislative evil contemplated by contemporary understandings of the ex post facto doctrine.

¶24 Even a procedural change amounts to an ex post facto violation, however, when it affects "matters of substance, by depriving a defendant of substantial protections with which the existing law surrounds the person accused of crime, or arbitrarily infringing upon substantial personal rights." *Collins*, 497 U.S. at 45, 110 S. Ct. at 2720 (quoting *Beazell*, 269 U.S. at 171, 46 S. Ct. at 69; *Malloy v. South Carolina*, 237 U.S. 180, 183, 35 S. Ct. 507, 508 (1915); and *Duncan v. Missouri*, 152 U.S. 377, 382-83, 14 S. Ct. 570, 572 (1894)) (internal quotation marks omitted). The change involved here does not affect the substantive matters of the defendants' prosecutions. *See id.* Under the new sentencing statutes, to obtain a death sentence, the state must prove the same aggravating circumstances required by the former statute and must prove them beyond a reasonable doubt. The only difference is that a jury, rather than a judge, decides whether the state has proved its case. The new sentencing statutes do not place the defendants in jeopardy of any greater punishment than that already imposed under the superseded statutes. Accordingly, applying the new sentencing statutes does not violate the federal or state Ex Post Facto Clause.

---

[6] S.B. 1001 made only technical and conforming changes to the aggravating circumstance list. 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 1.

IV.

Does the Double Jeopardy Clause Prohibit Resentencing Under Arizona's Amended Capital Sentencing Procedure?

¶25 The defendants argue that the double jeopardy provisions of the United States and Arizona Constitutions[7] preclude resentencing under the new sentencing statutes. We hold that they do not.

¶26 Double jeopardy prevents the government from prosecuting an individual more than once for the same offense. *Green v. United States*, 355 U.S. 184, 187, 78 S. Ct. 221, 223 (1957). According to the Supreme Court:

> The underlying idea . . . is that the State with all its resources and power should not be allowed to make repeated attempts to convict an individual for an alleged offense, thereby subjecting him to embarrassment, expense and ordeal and compelling him to live in a continuing state of anxiety and insecurity, as well as enhancing the possibility that even though innocent he may be found guilty.

Id. at 187-88, 78 S. Ct. at 223; *see also Sattazahn v. Pennsylvania*, ___ U.S. ___, ___; 123 S. Ct. 732, 745-46 (2003) (reaffirming principle that the underlying purpose of the Double Jeopardy Clause is to prohibit repeated attempts by the state to convict, thereby exposing a defendant to embarrassment, expense, and the ordeal of another proceeding).

¶27 Double jeopardy principles generally do not apply to sentencing proceedings. *United States v. DiFrancesco*, 449 U.S. 117, 132, 101 S.

---

[7] "[N]or shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb . . . ." U.S. Const. amend. V.

— "No person shall . . . be twice put in jeopardy for the same offense." Ariz. Const. art. II, § 10.

Ct. 426, 435 (1980). Capital sentencing proceedings, however, provide an exception to the general rule. The penalty phase of a capital trial resembles an ordinary trial proceeding in which the sentencing authority chooses "between two alternatives together with standards to guide [its] decision, [and] the prosecution undert[akes] the burden of establishing facts beyond a reasonable doubt." *Monge v. California*, 524 U.S. 721, 730, 118 S. Ct. 2246, 2251 (1998) (discussing *Bullington v. Missouri*, 451 U.S. 430, 101 S. Ct. 1852 (1981)); *see Arizona v. Rumsey*, 467 U.S. 203, 212, 104 S. Ct. 2305, 2310 (1984) (holding double jeopardy applies to the penalty phase of capital trial because the penalty phase "proceeding is like a trial"). Therefore, we must determine whether resentencing the defendants under Arizona's new sentencing statutes violates the prohibition against double jeopardy.

A.

Resentencing Does Not Increase Sentences.

¶28 The defendants argue that because Arizona's former law prescribing judge sentencing was unconstitutional, the most severe penalty they could have received for first degree murder at the original sentencing was life or natural life in prison. They assert that, under superseded section 13-703, a convicted murderer could not receive the death penalty because that punishment conceptually did not exist. Therefore, they argue, a resentencing proceeding under the new sentencing statutes would expose them to a more severe penalty than was originally available and thus constitutes double jeopardy. The defendants rely upon decisions from two state intermediate appellate courts, *California v. Harvey*, 142 Cal. Rptr. 887 (App. 1978), and *State v. Choate*, 151 Ariz. 57, 725 P.2d 764 (App. 1986).

¶29 In *Harvey*, a jury convicted Harvey of several counts, including first degree murder of a police officer. 142 Cal. Rptr. at 888. After Harvey's sentencing, the California Supreme Court declared the state's capital sentencing statute unconstitutional because it failed to bring mitigating evidence into the sentencing calculus. *Id.* at 890-91; *see*

Rockwell v. Superior Court, 556 P.2d 1101, 1116 (Cal. 1976). While Harvey's appeal was pending, the California Legislature amended the state's capital sentencing scheme. *Harvey*, 142 Cal. Rptr. at 890-91. The state argued that Harvey should be resentenced under the new statute. *Id.* The appellate court disagreed, holding that resentencing would violate double jeopardy because, when the state supreme court held the former capital sentencing scheme unconstitutional, "that declaration automatically reduced appellant's sentence to life imprisonment." *Id.* at 891.

¶30 Similarly, in *Choate*, the Arizona Court of Appeals held that double jeopardy prevented resentencing of a defendant on a dangerous-nature sentencing issue. 151 Ariz. at 58, 725 P.2d at 765. A jury convicted Choate of second degree murder and aggravated assault. *Id.* at 57, 725 P.2d at 764. The court of appeals vacated the dangerous-nature sentence for the second degree murder conviction because that issue was not determined by a jury. *Id.* On remand, the trial judge ordered a new jury to convene to determine whether Choate should receive the dangerous-nature sentence. *Id.* Choate appealed that order. The court of appeals concluded that, because the trial judge mistakenly dismissed the jury without submitting the dangerous nature charge in the first case, permitting a new jury to consider the enhancement allegation would constitute double jeopardy. *Id.* at 58, 725 P.2d at 765.

¶31 The Supreme Court addressed this very issue in *Dobbert*, however, and reached a different conclusion. Dobbert made the same argument that the defendants make here. The Florida Supreme Court declared the death penalty statute in effect at the time of his murders unconstitutional. Therefore, Dobbert argued, he could not receive a death sentence because "at the time he murdered his children there was no death penalty 'in effect' in Florida." 432 U.S. at 297, 97 S. Ct. at 2300. The Supreme Court rejected this argument, holding that double jeopardy did not attach because a statute, albeit unconstitutional, permitting capital punishment for first degree murder existed at the time of the crimes. *Id.* at 298, 97 S. Ct. at 2300. That statute placed the defendant on notice that he faced capital punishment if he were convicted. *Id.*

¶32 The *Harvey* court distinguished *Dobbert* by noting that Dobbert was ultimately sentenced under a constitutional statute, whereas Harvey was not. 142 Cal. Rptr. at 890. We do not find the distinction persuasive, however, because it does not affect the Supreme Court's *Dobbert* analysis. There the Court discounted the defendant's "sophistic argument" because the more important consideration was that the state's first degree murder sentencing policy provided a death sentence even though the *procedures* for imposing that sentence later were found unconstitutional. *Dobbert*, 432 U.S. at 297-98, 97 S. Ct. at 2300 (quoting *Chicot County Drainage Dist. v. Baxter State Bank*, 308 U.S. 371, 374, 60 S. Ct. 317, 318 (1940)); *see also Knapp v. Cardwell*, 667 F.2d 1253, 1264 & n.9 (9th Cir. 1982) (rejecting argument that death sentence is automatically reduced "to life imprisonment immediately upon invalidation of the state's death penalty law"). In short, the Court rejected the defendants' argument in *Dobbert*.

¶33 The basic issue we must resolve is not whether a death sentence metaphysically existed when the defendants were sentenced, but rather whether any defendant was "acquitted" at his original trial of whatever findings were necessary to impose a death sentence. While a defendant can be resentenced following an appellate reversal of his or her original sentence, the Double Jeopardy Clause prohibits imposing any sentence of which the defendant was either actually or impliedly "acquitted" in the first instance. *Rumsey*, 467 U.S. at 211, 104 S. Ct. at 2310; *Bullington*, 451 U.S. at 437, 445, 101 S. Ct. at 1857, 1861; *Peak v. Acuna*, 203 Ariz. 83, ___ ¶ 8, 50 P.3d 833, 835 (2002) (stating implied acquittal exists where appellate court reverses conviction for insufficiency of evidence and double jeopardy precludes retrial). Thus, a defendant cannot be sentenced to death at a subsequent sentencing proceeding if "the sentencer or reviewing court has decided that the prosecution has not proved its case *that the death penalty is appropriate*." *Poland v. Arizona*, 476 U.S. 147, 155, 106 S. Ct. 1749, 1755 (1986) (internal quotation marks omitted).

¶34 The Supreme Court has thoroughly treated and established the legal principle that applies here. In *State v. Rumsey*, a jury convicted the defendant of first degree murder. 130 Ariz. 427, 636 P.2d 1209 (1981).

During the sentencing phase of the trial, the judge, misinterpreting the pecuniary gain aggravating circumstance as applying only to a murder for hire, found no aggravating circumstances and sentenced the defendant to life in prison. *Id.* at 431-32, 636 P.2d at 1213-14. On appeal, we held that the pecuniary gain aggravating circumstance included any murder committed for financial gain and remanded the matter for resentencing. *Id.* at 431, 636 P.2d at 1213. On remand, the judge determined that the pecuniary gain circumstance existed and sentenced the defendant to death. *State v. Rumsey*, 136 Ariz. 166, 168, 665 P.2d 48, 50 (1983). We reviewed the case on direct appeal and held that Rumsey's death sentence violated the Double Jeopardy Clause because the life sentence imposed at his first trial implicitly acquitted him of the death sentence, and that Rumsey was "entitled to finality" on that issue. *Id.* at 175, 665 P.2d at 57.

¶35 The Supreme Court granted *certiorari* and affirmed. It held that a capital defendant cannot receive the death penalty on resentencing if he originally had been sentenced to life in prison. *Rumsey*, 467 U.S. at 212, 104 S. Ct. at 2310. The Court explained that "an acquittal on the merits by the sole decisionmaker in the proceeding is final and bars retrial on the same charge." *Id.* at 211, 104 S. Ct. at 2310. Thus, the Supreme Court's *Rumsey* decision speaks to situations in which the defendant originally received a sentence *other than* death.

¶36 In a similar case in which the defendant originally received a capital sentence, however, the Supreme Court ruled differently. In *Poland v. Arizona*, the Court held that capital defendants sentenced to death at their original sentencing proceeding and whose sentences were vacated on appeal can be resentenced to death on remand. 476 U.S. at 151, 106 S. Ct. at 1753. Both of the Poland brothers received death sentences following their first degree murder convictions. *State v. Poland*, 132 Ariz. 269, 273, 645 P.2d 784, 788 (1982). During the sentencing phase, the judge failed to find the pecuniary gain aggravating circumstance because, like the trial judge in *Rumsey*, he misunderstood that circumstance as applying only to a murder for hire. *Id.* at 285-86, 645 P.2d at 800-01. The judge did, however, find the "especially heinous, cruel or depraved" statutory aggravating factor and

sentenced the defendants to death. *Id.* at 285, 645 P.2d at 800. On appeal, this court held that the evidence adduced during the sentencing proceeding did not support a finding of a heinous, cruel or depraved murder. *Id.* at 285, 645 P.2d at 800. We also restated that a killing need not be a murder for hire to qualify for the pecuniary gain aggravator. *Id.* at 286, 645 P.2d at 801. On remand, the judge again sentenced both Polands to death. *State v. Poland (Patrick)*, 144 Ariz. 388, 392, 698 P.2d 183, 187 (1985); *State v. Poland (Michael)*, 144 Ariz. 412, 414, 698 P.2d 207, 209 (1985). We again reviewed and affirmed the Polands' sentences on direct appeal and held that the evidence, although insufficient to support a finding of cruelty, did support a finding of pecuniary gain motive. *Poland (Patrick)*, 144 Ariz. at 407, 698 P.2d at 202; *Poland (Michael)*, 144 Ariz. at 416, 698 P.2d at 211.

¶37 On *certiorari*, the Supreme Court distinguished the Polands' case from *Rumsey*, and that distinction was critical. In *Poland*, both defendants *originally received* capital sentences. Unlike the judge in Rumsey's trial, no fact-finder had "acquitted" the Polands of capital murder by imposing a prison sentence at the first sentencing proceeding. *Poland*, 476 U.S. at 156-57, 106 S. Ct. at 1756. On resentencing, then, the defendants did not face sentencing on a charge of which they had been previously "acquitted" for double jeopardy purposes. *Id.* at 157, 106 S. Ct. at 1756. Therefore, jeopardy did not attach and double jeopardy did not bar the subsequent death sentences. *Id.*

¶38 Like the defendants in *Poland*, the defendants on direct appeal all received death sentences at their original trials. The fact-finder made those findings necessary to impose a death sentence. In no sense has a fact-finder concluded that the state failed to prove aggravating circumstances beyond a reasonable doubt. On remand, no defendant can receive a sentence greater than that which already has been imposed. Accordingly, we hold that jeopardy has not attached.

B.

Resentencing Does Not Supplement the Original Jury Verdict.

¶39 The defendants also argue that resentencing violates double jeopardy because further jury proceedings supplement the original jury verdict, thereby violating each defendant's constitutional "right to have his trial completed by a particular tribunal." *Wade v. Hunter*, 336 U.S. 684, 689, 69 S. Ct. 834, 837 (1949). Although completing a defendant's trial with the same judge or jurors is ideal, a defendant holds no absolute right to such an arrangement. In fact, in *Wade v. Hunter*, the Supreme Court affirmed a military conviction in which the charges were dropped from one court-martial proceeding and re-instituted in another to accommodate witnesses. *Id.* at 687-88, 69 S. Ct. at 836. According to the Supreme Court:

> The double-jeopardy provision of the Fifth Amendment . . . does not mean that every time a defendant is put to trial before a competent tribunal he is entitled to go free if the trial fails to end in a final judgment. Such a rule would create an insuperable obstacle to the administration of justice in many cases in which there is no semblance of the type of oppressive practices at which the double-jeopardy prohibition is aimed. There may be unforeseeable circumstances that arise during a trial making its completion impossible, such as the failure of a jury to agree on a verdict. In such event the purpose of law to protect society from those guilty of crimes frequently would be frustrated by denying courts power to put the defendant to trial again.

Id. at 688-89, 69 S. Ct. at 837.

¶40 The ability to resentence a capital defendant by a different set of jurors is implicit in double jeopardy cases decided by the Supreme Court in a death penalty context. *See Rumsey*, 467 U.S. at 211, 104 S.

Ct. at 2310; *Wade*, 336 U.S. at 688-89, 69 S. Ct. at 837.[8] A capital defendant whose original sentence is vacated on appeal can be resentenced to death so long as the defendant has not been "acquitted" of the death sentence. *E.g.*, *Sattazahn*, ___ U.S. at ___, 123 S. Ct. at 738; *Poland*, 476 U.S. at 151, 106 S. Ct. at 1753.

C.

The Arizona Constitution.

¶41 We reach the same result under Article II, Section 10 of the Arizona Constitution. In *Pool v. Superior Court*, we interpreted the state Double Jeopardy Clause more broadly than its federal counterpart when prosecutorial misconduct causes a mistrial. 139 Ariz. 98, 108, 677 P.2d 261, 271 (1984); *accord State v. Minnitt*, 203 Ariz. 431, ___ ¶ 29, 55 P.3d 774, 781 (2002). While we recognized the importance of consistency between federal and state constitutional law, we found it necessary to diverge from the double jeopardy standards established by the United States Supreme Court under the federal constitution. Our decision turned on the principle that the purpose of the Arizona Double Jeopardy Clause includes protecting citizens from facing multiple trials for the same offense because of prosecutorial bad faith:

> In our view, therefore, the resolution of the question of when jeopardy attaches should turn upon the concept of enforcing the constitutional guarantee against double jeopardy when the right to be free from multiple trials, which that clause was meant to guarantee, would be impaired by the prosecutor's intentional, improper conduct. We do not agree that standards cannot be formulated to accomplish the objectives of the clause in situations such as this.

Pool, 139 Ariz. at 108, 677 P.2d at 271 (citation omitted).

---

[8] For the most part, recalling the defendant's original guilt phase jury also presents logistical problems and is wholly impractical.

¶42 The defendants do not face further jeopardy because of prosecutorial misconduct. Moreover, we find no reason to extend the state Double Jeopardy Clause beyond its federal counterpart under these facts. Therefore, we conclude that applying the new sentencing statutes does not constitute a double jeopardy violation under the Arizona Constitution.

V.

Should Defendants Convicted of Murders Committed Before the Natural Life Sentence Became Available Have Their Sentences Reduced to Life if the Court Reduces Their Sentences?

¶43 In 1993, the Arizona Legislature amended A.R.S. section 13-703 to add a "natural life" sentencing option for defendants convicted of first degree murder. 1993 Ariz. Sess. Laws ch. 153, § 1. The parties stipulate, and we agree, that the sentence of life without the possibility of parole for twenty-five years, rather than natural life, must apply to those defendants sentenced under the pre-1993 statute. *See, e.g., State v. Barreras*, 181 Ariz. 516, 523-24 n.7, 892 P.2d 852, 859- 60 n.7 (1995) ("The amended statute [permitting natural life sentence] is inapplicable here, however, because this case arose before its effective date."). If subsequent proceedings result in life sentences, these defendants cannot receive a natural life sentence; only a sentence of life without the possibility of parole for twenty-five years can apply.

VI.

Should the Court Review Sixth Amendment *Ring II* Error as Structural Error or for Harmless Error?

¶44 The Supreme Court struck down Arizona's former capital sentencing statutes because they permitted a judge, rather than a jury, to find aggravating factors. *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 2443. We conclude that Arizona's failure to submit this element of capital murder to the jury does not constitute structural error. Consequently, the Sixth Amendment does not require automatic reversal of a death

sentence imposed under the former sentencing statutes. *Neder v. United States*, 527 U.S. 1, 8, 119 S. Ct. 1827, 1833 (1999); *Arizona v. Fulminante*, 499 U.S. 279, 306-07, 111 S. Ct. 1246, 1263 (1991). Instead, we will review the defendants' capital sentences for harmless error.

¶45 Most errors that we consider on appeal, even those involving constitutional error, constitute trial errors, "which occur[] during the presentation of the case to the jury, and which may therefore be quantitatively assessed in the context of other evidence presented." *Fulminante*, 499 U.S. at 307-08, 111 S. Ct. at 1264. In cases involving trial error, we consider whether the error, so assessed, was harmless beyond a reasonable doubt. If so, we uphold the verdict entered. In a limited number of cases, however, structural error occurs. In such instances, we automatically reverse the guilty verdict entered. Unlike trial errors, structural errors "deprive defendants of 'basic protections' without which 'a criminal trial cannot reliably serve its function as a vehicle for determination of guilt or innocence . . . and no criminal punishment may be regarded as fundamentally fair.'" *Neder*, 527 U.S. at 8-9, 119 S. Ct. at 1833 (quoting *Rose v. Clark*, 478 U.S. 570, 577-78, 106 S. Ct. 3101, 3106 (1986)).

¶46 The Supreme Court has defined relatively few instances in which we should regard error as structural. Those instances involve errors such as a biased trial judge,[9] complete denial of criminal defense counsel,[10] denial of access to criminal defense counsel during an overnight trial recess,[11] denial of selfrepresentation in criminal cases,[12] defective reasonable doubt jury instructions,[13] exclusion of jurors of the

---

[9] *Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 47 S. Ct. 437 (1927).

[10] *Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372 U.S. 335, 83 S. Ct. 792 (1963).

[11] *Geders v. United States*, 425 U.S. 80, 96 S. Ct. 1330 (1976).

[12] *McKaskle v. Wiggins*, 465 U.S. 168, 104 S. Ct. 944(1984).

[13] *Sullivan v. Louisiana*, 508 U.S. 275, 113 S. Ct. 2078 (1993).

defendant's race from grand jury selection,[14] excusing a juror because of his views on capital punishment,[15] and denial of a public criminal trial.[16] In all those instances, the error infected "the entire trial process" from beginning to end. *Neder,* 527 U.S. at 8, 119 S. Ct. at 1833 (quoting *Brecht v. Abrahamson*, 507 U.S. 619, 630, 113 S. Ct. 1710, 1717 (1993)).

¶47 The Court's *Ring II* decision turned upon the fact that aggravating circumstances serve as the functional equivalent of an element of the greater capital murder offense, rather than as a sentencing factor. *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 2443. "Because Arizona's enumerated aggravating factors operate as the *functional equivalent of an element of a greater offense*," the Supreme Court held, "the Sixth Amendment requires that they be found by a jury." *Id.* (emphasis added) (citation and internal quotations omitted). The essential question, therefore, is whether we should characterize Arizona's failure to submit this element of the capital murder offense to the jury as structural or trial error.[17]

¶48 In a decision foreshadowing *Apprendi* and *Ring II*, the Supreme Court declined to find structural error when the trial judge failed to submit an element of the offense to the jury. In *Neder v. United States*, the Court held that the trial court's failure to instruct the jury on the materiality element of federal tax fraud should be reviewed as trial

---

[14] *Vasquez v. Hillery*, 474 U.S. 254, 106 S. Ct. 617 (1986).

[15] *Gray v. Mississippi*, 481 U.S. 648, 107 S. Ct. 2045 (1987).

[16] *Waller v. Georgia*, 467 U.S. 39, 104 S. Ct. 2210 (1984).

[17] At various times, the Court's opinion suggests that *Ring II* error should be considered under a harmless error analysis. First, the Court declined to review the case for harmless error, stating instead that state courts should be the first to do so. *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at ___ n.7, 122 S. Ct. at 2443 n.7. Second, when commenting upon the fate of death row inmates after the *Ring II* decision, Justice O'Connor stated that "prisoners will be unable to satisfy the standards of harmless error or plain error review." *Id.* at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 2449 (O'Connor, J., dissenting). Because the Court did not consider the issue of the appropriate standard of review, we do not regard these statements as conclusive.

error. 527 U.S. at 19-20, 119 S. Ct. at 1839. The Court distinguished an error omitting an element of the offense in a jury instruction from structural error: "Unlike such defects as the complete deprivation of counsel or trial before a biased judge, an instruction that omits an element of the offense does not *necessarily* render a criminal trial fundamentally unfair or an unreliable vehicle for determining guilt or innocence." *Id.* at 9, 119 S. Ct. at 1833. Thus, the Court concluded, omitting an element of the offense from the jury instruction is not the sort of error that taints the trial process itself.

Neder was tried before an impartial judge, under the correct standard of proof and with the assistance of counsel; a fairly selected, impartial jury was instructed to consider all of the evidence and argument in respect to Neder's defense against the tax charges. Of course, the court erroneously failed to charge the jury on the element of materiality, but that error did not render Neder's trial "fundamentally unfair," as that term is used in our cases. *Id.* at 9, 119 S. Ct. at 1834.[18]

¶49 In a similar decision that followed *Apprendi* and *Ring II,* the Court again applied the plain error test to a judge's consideration of a factor properly left to the jury. *United States v. Cotton*, 535 U.S. 625, ___, 122 S. Ct. 1781, 1785 (2002). Federal law makes available enhanced penalties for drug offenses if the government proves a statutory threshold drug quantity. *Id.* at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 1783. In *Cotton*, the government failed to allege in its superseding indictment the quantity of drugs involved in the offense, as required by the enhanced penalty. *Id.* Based on trial testimony, the district court found the petitioner "responsible for at least 500 grams of cocaine base," ten times the amount set by statute for an enhanced penalty, and imposed the enhanced sentence. *Id.* at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 1784. The Supreme Court concluded that the district court improperly usurped the quantity finding from the grand jury, but reviewed for plain error. *Id.* at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 1785-86. The Court held that the trial evidence was so

---

[18] *See also California v. Roy*, 519 U.S. 2, 5-6, 117 S. Ct. 337, 339 (1996) (holding trial judge's failure to instruct jury on an element of accomplice liability first degree murder was a trial error to which the harmless error test applied).

"overwhelming" and "essentially uncontroverted" that "the error did not seriously affect the fairness, integrity, or public reputation of judicial proceedings." *Id.* at ___, 122 S. Ct. at 1786.

¶50 Although *Neder* and *Cotton* did not involve a capital sentence, their holdings that a failure to submit one element of an offense to a jury does not infect the trial process from beginning to end apply equally here. Under both Arizona's superseded and current capital sentencing schemes, a defendant's trial consists of two phases: a guilt phase and a penalty phase. In the guilt phase, the jury decides whether the defendant committed first degree or felony murder as defined by A.R.S. section 13-1105. If the jury finds the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, the trial continues to the penalty phase. Under the former system, the judge found, beyond a reasonable doubt, the ultimate element required to complete a capital murder offense: at least one aggravating circumstance not outweighed by one or more mitigating factors. A.R.S. § 13- 703.E. Defendants' trials thus took place before an impartial judge and jury, who used the correct standard of proof. Defendants received the assistance of counsel, who were available during all phases of their prosecution. Any error, then, affected the submission of one element rather than the entire trial and

did not render the entire trial fundamentally unfair.[19] *See Neder*, 527 U.S. at 9, 119 S. Ct. at 1833.

¶51 We are not the first court to reach this conclusion. Courts implementing *Apprendi* and *Ring* have reached a consensus that structural error does not occur when a judge fails to submit to the jury an element of a crime, otherwise required to be found by a jury under the Sixth Amendment.[20] In *United States v. Matthews*, the court held

---

[19] The dissent disagrees with this conclusion, arguing that the defendants experienced a "[c]omplete denial of [the right to] trial by jury at the sentencing phase . . . ." Dissent, ¶ 109. Notably, the dissent does not suggest that the defendants were denied a trial by jury, and it could not, for the error here resulted not from denying defendants a jury trial but from the failure to submit one element of the capital offense to the jury for decision. A capital trial comprises just one trial, divided into guilt and sentencing phases, and has always been understood as such, both by this court and by the U.S. Supreme Court. *See, e.g., Tuilaepa v. California*, 512 U.S. 967, 971-72, 114 S. Ct. 2630, 2634 (1994) (holding trier of fact must find one aggravating circumstance at either the guilt or penalty phase); *Payne v. Tennessee*, 501 U.S. 808, 817, 823, 825-26, 111 S. Ct. 2597, 2604, 2607-08 (1991) (repeated references to "guilt phase" and "penalty phase" of capital trial); *State v. Smith*, 203 Ariz. 75, *passim*, 50 P.3d 825, *passim* (2002) (referring to "sentencing phase" and "sentencing hearing"); *Ring I*, 200 Ariz. at 279 ¶ 42, 25 P.3d at 1151 (referring to a "separate evidentiary hearing"). The only courts of which we are aware that have considered the argument that a capital trial consists of two "trials" rather than two phases of one trial have rejected the dissent's approach. *Flamer v. Delaware*, 68 F.3d 736, 758-59 (3rd Cir. 1995) ("The guilt and penalty phases of a capital trial are parts of a single proceeding, and there is no constitutional requirement that they be treated as if they were two entirely separate trials."); *Holland v. Mississippi*, 705 So. 2d 307, 330 ¶ 61 (Miss. 1997) (sentencing phase of a capital trial not a separate trial, but that phase of the case that concerns sentencing).

Arizona statutes reflect the single capital trial approach accepted by our court and the Supreme Court. Arizona law refers to the sentencing proceeding as the capital trial's "penalty phase." *E.g.*, A.R.S. § 13-703.C. In addition, former and current capital sentencing statutes permit use at the sentencing phase of evidence adduced during the guilt phase of the trial. *Id.* §§ 13-703.C (2001), 13-703.D (Supp. 2002).

[20] The one case finding structural error is *Esparza v. Mitchell*, a case involving a challenge under the Eighth Amendment rather than the Sixth. In that case, two members of the panel held the harmless error test inapplicable in a capital case

(continued...)

"*Apprendi* error is susceptible to harmless error analysis." 312 F.3d 652, 665 (5th Cir. 2002). The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals also found "that errors in both the indictment and the charge to the jury are subject to harmless-error analysis." *United States v. Dumes,* 313 F.3d 372, 385 (7th Cir. 2002); *accord United States v. Sanders*, 247 F.3d 139, 150 (4th Cir. 2001) (citing cases from the First, Second, Fourth, Fifth, Seventh, and Eleventh Circuits holding that harmless error applies in *Apprendi* cases); *Johnson v. Nevada*, P.3d 450, 459-60 (Nev. 2002).[21]

¶52 Those holdings comport with prior Arizona law. In *State v. Styers*, we applied the fundamental error test to the trial judge's failure to define the "without legal authority" element of the kidnapping offense in instructions to the jury. 177 Ariz. 104, 111-12, 865 P.2d 765, 772-73 (1993).

¶53 Accordingly, we hold that Arizona's failure to require a trial judge to submit the aggravating circumstance element of capital murder

---

(...continued)
where, under Ohio law, aggravating factors were required to be charged in the indictment but were not. 310 F.3d 414, 421 (6th Cir. 2002). The dissenting judge, concluding that harmless error applied, outlined the seminal Supreme Court cases defining the harmless error doctrine and concluded that the error involved did not amount to deprivation of "basic protections without which a criminal trial cannot reliably serve its function as a vehicle for determination of guilt or innocence." *Id.* at 428 (Suhrheinrich, J., dissenting) (quoting *Neder*, 527 U.S. at 8-9, 119 S. Ct. at 1833 (internal quotation marks omitted)).

[21] In addition to these decisions involving the Sixth Amendment, federal courts have held that Eighth Amendment violations occurring at the trial court level are subject to harmless error analysis. *See, e.g., Jones (Lewis) v. United States*, 527 U.S. 373, 402-05, 119 S. Ct. 2090, 2108-10 (1999); *Clemons v. Mississippi*, 494 U.S. 738, 110 S. Ct. 1441 (1990). Most recently, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that a death sentence imposed when an unconstitutionally vague jury instruction was given could be reviewed for harmless error. *Valerio v. Crawford*, 306 F.3d 742, 756 (9th Cir. 2002) ("When a state trial court sentences a defendant to death based in part on an unconstitutionally vague aggravating circumstance, the state appellate court . . . can find the error harmless under *Chapman v. California*." (Citation omitted.)).

to a jury does not constitute structural error. We will review the sentences of these defendants for harmless error.

VII.

A.

Does *Ring II* Apply to Aggravating Circumstances Involving Prior Convictions?

¶54 Arizona law establishes two aggravating circumstances for prior criminal convictions.[22] A.R.S. § 13-703.F.1-.2. The first of Arizona's prior conviction factors, A.R.S. section 13- 703.F.1, applies when "[t]he defendant has been convicted of another offense in the United States for which under Arizona law a sentence of life imprisonment or death was imposable." The second, A.R.S. section 13-703.F.2, is implicated when "[t]he defendant was previously convicted of a serious

---

[22] The 2002 amendment did not change the F.1 and F.2 aggravating factors. 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 1.

offense, whether preparatory or completed."[23] In *Almendarez-Torres v. United States*, the Supreme Court held that a judge could consider prior convictions to enhance a penalty beyond that authorized by the facts established by the jury's verdict. 523 U.S. 224, 226-27, 118 S. Ct. 1219, 1222 (1998).

¶55 The State argues that *Almendarez-Torres* establishes an exception to *Apprendi/Ring* for the two prior conviction aggravating circumstances. According to the State, a judge may constitutionally determine the existence of any prior conviction. The defendants argue that *Almendarez-Torres* is no longer good law.[24] They also argue that

---

[23] Section 13-703.H defines "serious offense" as:

1. First degree murder.
2. Second degree murder.
3. Manslaughter.
4. Aggravated assault resulting in serious physical injury or committed by the use, threatened use or exhibition of a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument.
5. Sexual assault.
6. Any dangerous crime against children.
7. Arson of an occupied structure.
8. Robbery.
9. Burglary in the first degree.
10. Kidnapping.
11. Sexual conduct with a minor under fifteen years of age.

A.R.S. § 13-703.H (Supp. 2002).

Before 1993, this aggravating circumstance occurred if "[t]he defendant was previously convicted of a felony in the United States involving the use or threat of violence on another person." A.R.S. § 13-703.F.2 (1989), *amended by* 1993 Ariz. Sess. Laws ch. 153, § 1.

[24] The defendants argue that we should ignore *Almendarez- Torres* because Justice Thomas allegedly has repudiated his position in that case, thereby "expressly" invalidating the decision. In *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, Justice Thomas did express regret for voting with the five member *Almendarez-Torres* majority. 530 U.S. 466, 518-21, 120 S. Ct. 2348, 2378-79 (2000).

The defendants' supposition as to Justice Thomas's view, however, does not comport with the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Sattazahn v. Pennsylvania*, U.S.

(continued...)

the F.1 and F.2 aggravating circumstances do not fit within the prior conviction exception. Alternatively, they argue that the Arizona Constitution's jury trial guarantee should supplant *Almendarez- Torres* and require a jury determination of prior convictions. For the following reasons, we hold that *Almendarez-Torres* remains effective and that the Sixth Amendment does not require a jury to determine prior convictions under sections 13-703.F.1 and F.2.

1. Prior Conviction Aggravating Circumstance.

¶56 First we consider whether Arizona's statutory aggravating circumstance for prior convictions falls within the *Almendarez-Torres* exception. In cases handed down within the past five years, the Supreme Court consistently has stated that a statutory provision permitting increased penalties when a defendant has a prior conviction operates as a sentencing enhancement and not as an element of a criminal offense.[25]

¶57 In two Supreme Court cases, defendants challenged sentencing enhancements when the government failed to allege the factor increasing their penalty in the indictment. In *Almendarez-Torres*, the Court held that a prior conviction need not be alleged in a criminal indictment. 523 U.S. at 226-27, 118 S. Ct. at 1222. The Court first concluded that Congress intended to use recidivism as a sentencing factor and not as a substantive element. *Id.* at 230-31, 118 S. Ct. at 1226. It then noted that recidivist provisions traditionally are used exclusively as sentencing factors, pointing out that no federal criminal

---

(...continued)

___, 123 S. Ct. 732 (2003). In that case, Justice Thomas joined Justice Scalia's separate opinion which stated, in *dicta*, that "the existence of any fact *(other than a prior conviction)* increas[ing] the maximum punishment that may be imposed . . . constitutes an element [of the offense]." *Id.* at ___, 123 S. Ct. at 739 (emphasis added). This language demonstrates the dangers of vote-counting before the Court announces its decision on a particular issue.

[25] The Court continuously refers to the prior conviction enhancement as an exception to *Apprendi*. *E.g.*, *Sattazahn*, ___U.S. at ___, 123 S. Ct. at 739; *United States v. Cotton*, 535 U.S. 625, ___, 122 S. Ct. 1781, 1783 (2002).

statute contains recidivism as a statutory element. *Id.* at 244, 118 S. Ct. at 1231. Enhanced penalties for repeat offenders do "not relate to the commission of the offense, *but go[] to the punishment only*, and therefore . . . may be subsequently decided [by a judge]." *Id.* at 244, 118 S. Ct. at 1231 (quoting *Graham v. West Virginia*, 224 U.S. 616, 629, 32 S. Ct. 583, 588 (1912)).

¶58 In its next term, the Court decided a similar case and reached a revised, but consistent, conclusion. In *Jones v. United States*, the Court held that federal prosecutors must allege in the indictment and prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, an element of the federal car jacking statute the lower courts previously had regarded as a sentencing factor. 526 U.S. 227, 229, 119 S. Ct. 1215, 1217 (1999). In Jones's case, serious bodily injury provided the additional element. *Id.* at 231, 119 S. Ct. at 1218. Notwithstanding its decision, the Court reaffirmed that "not every fact expanding a penalty range must be stated in a felony indictment" and expressly distinguished sentence enhancements for prior criminal convictions from other statutory elements because the law traditionally regards "recidivism as a sentencing factor, not as an element to be set out in the indictment." *Id.* at 248-49, 119 S. Ct. at 1226-27. The Court appeared less concerned with the fact that *Jones* involved a Sixth Amendment challenge, while *Almendarez-Torres* did not, than with the fact that sentencing enhancements for prior convictions serve a traditional penological purpose. *Id.*

¶59 The Court revisited the prior conviction sentence enhancement issue in *Apprendi*, decided one year after *Jones*. In *Apprendi*, the Court held that a statutory provision providing an increased penalty when a crime was motivated by "hate" involved not a sentencing enhancer, but an element of the offense. 530 U.S. at 491-92, 120 S. Ct. at 2363. Consequently, the Sixth Amendment jury trial right required that the jury determine the element's existence before the enhanced penalty could be imposed. *Id.* at 490, 120 S. Ct. at 2362-63 ("[A]ny fact that increases the penalty for a crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum must be submitted to a jury, and proved beyond a reasonable doubt."). The Court carefully distinguished its view that prior convictions are not elements of an offense and structured its holding to

exclude prior convictions from its reach. *Id.* at 487-90, 120 S. Ct. at 2361-63.

¶60 The *Apprendi* Court found no need to submit the question of prior convictions to the jury because, unlike other factors, prior convictions already had been established through proceedings incorporating procedural safeguards:

> Both the certainty that procedural safeguards attached to any "fact" of prior conviction, and the reality that Almendarez-Torres did not challenge the accuracy of that "fact" in his case, mitigated the due process and Sixth Amendment concerns otherwise implicated in allowing a judge to determine a "fact" increasing punishment beyond the maximum statutory range.

530 U.S. at 488, 120 S. Ct. at 2362. Thus, permitting a judge to decide the "fact" of a prior conviction does not raise Sixth Amendment concerns; those convictions are themselves products of Sixth Amendment-compliant proceedings.

¶61 We cannot ignore a Supreme Court decision interpreting federal law unless the Court expressly overrules or casts cognizable doubt on that decision. In *Agostini v. Felton*, the Court stated:

> We do not acknowledge, and we do not hold, that other courts should conclude our more recent cases have, by implication, overruled an earlier precedent. We reaffirm that "[i]f a precedent of this Court has direct application in a case, yet appears to rest on reasons rejected in some other line of decisions, [the lower court] should follow the case which directly controls, leaving to this Court the prerogative of overruling its own decisions."

521 U.S. 203, 237, 117 S. Ct. 1997, 2017 (1997) (quoting *Rodriguez de Quijas v. Shearson/American Exp., Inc.*, 490 U.S. 477, 484, 109 S. Ct. 1917, 1921-22 (1989)); *accord United States v. Gatewood*, 230 F.3d

186, 192 (6th Cir. 2000); *United States v. Pacheco-Zepeda*, 234 F.3d 411, 414 (9th Cir. 2000) ("If the views of the Supreme Court's individual justices and the composition of the Court remain the same, *Almendarez-Torres* may eventually be overruled.") (citing *Apprendi*, 120 S. Ct. at 2362 ("[I]t is arguable that *Almendarez-Torres* was incorrectly decided, and that a logical application of our reasoning today should apply if the recidivist issue were contested.")); *State v. Harrod*, 200 Ariz. 309, 318 ¶ 44, 26 P.3d 492, 501 (2001) (rejecting defendant's argument that *Apprendi* implicitly overruled *Walton*), *vacated on other grounds by Harrod v. Arizona*, ___ U.S. ___, 122 S. Ct. 2653 (2002) (mem.). Our constitutional system requires adherence to the rule of law established in *Almendarez-Torres* unless and until the Court unequivocally disapproves its holding. *Ring I*, 200 Ariz. at 279-80 ¶ 44, 25 P.3d at 1151-52.

2. Lower Federal and State Appellate Courts.

¶62 Courts consistently have implemented both *Apprendi* and *Almendarez-Torres*. In cases decided after *Apprendi*, many defendants facing prior conviction sentence enhancements argued that *Apprendi* had either overruled or cast doubt upon *Almendarez-Torres*. Courts universally reject this argument and recognize that the two cases can be harmonized by construing *Almendarez-Torres* as the exception to *Apprendi*'s general rule. *E.g.*, *United States v. Martino*, 294 F.3d 346, 349 (2d Cir. 2002); *United States v. Stone*, 306 F.3d 241, 243 (5th Cir. 2002); *Cherry v. Araneta*, 203 Ariz. 532, ___ ¶ 5, 57 P.3d 391, 392-93 (App. 2002); *State v. Kendall*, 58 P.3d 660, 667-68 (Kan. 2002). In explaining its decision, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals stated:

> It is true that in *Apprendi*, the Court expressed reservations about *Almendarez-Torres*. However, the Court reasoned that any due process or Sixth Amendment concerns—arising out of the judicial determination of a "fact" that increased punishment beyond the statutory maximum—were mitigated in *Almendarez-Torres* by "[b]oth the certainty that procedural safeguards attached to any 'fact' of prior

> conviction, and the reality that [the defendant] did not challenge the accuracy of that 'fact' in his case." Thus, the Court in *Apprendi* chose not to overrule *Almendarez-Torres,* and unmistakably carved out an exception for "prior convictions" that specifically preserved the holding of *Almendarez-Torres.*

Pacheco-Zepeda, 234 F.3d at 414 (citations omitted).

¶63 The Supreme Court consistently has held that legislatures may permit a judge to impose an increased penalty based upon a defendant's recidivism. We therefore conclude that the Sixth Amendment does not require a jury to find prior convictions beyond a reasonable doubt.

3. F.1 and F.2 Prior Conviction Aggravating Factors.

¶64 Several defendants whose cases are consolidated in this appeal received death sentences based, at least in part, upon prior conviction findings made by a sentencing judge. Following the teachings of *Almendarez-Torres*, *Jones* and *Apprendi*, we hold that the Sixth Amendment does not require remanding these cases for resentencing on the F.1 and F.2 circumstances.

¶65 The characteristic of a prior conviction aggravating circumstance that sets it apart from other circumstances is that the original criminal proceeding, through either a guilty plea or a verdict of guilt, established the circumstance. No additional benefit derives from having a jury re-find an aggravating circumstance already established through a guilty plea or a jury verdict. At each proceeding giving rise to the prior criminal conviction, defendants either waived their right to a jury trial or received a jury determination of guilt, and procedural safeguards protected the defendant against constitutional violations. Moreover, each defendant had an opportunity to appeal his conviction.

¶66 The F.1 and F 2 aggravating circumstances contemplate a more severe punishment for persons who continue to commit crimes. Our jurisprudence traditionally has viewed recidivism as a sentencing factor

to be determined by a judge. *Almendarez-Torres*, 523 U.S. at 243, 118 S. Ct. at 1230. Moreover, under the pre-*Ring II* capital sentencing scheme, the legislature clearly intended prior convictions to be sentencing factors and not substantive elements of capital murder. *See, e.g.*, A.R.S. § 13-703.F–.G (Supp. 2001) (instructing the court to consider aggravating circumstances when deciding which sentence to impose).

¶67 We reach a different conclusion for those defendants for whom the trial judge found an F.2 aggravating circumstance prior to 1993. As to those defendants, determining the presence of the F.2 factor required additional fact finding; the judge needed to go beyond the mere fact that the prior conviction existed.

¶68 Arizona amended the requirements for finding an F.2 factor in 1993.[26] Prior to the 1993 amendment, section 13- 703.F.2 permitted finding this aggravating circumstance when "[t]he defendant was previously convicted of a felony in the United States *involving the use or threat of violence on another person*." A.R.S. § 13-703.F.2 (1989) (emphasis added). State law did not define "violence" in this context. In *United States v. Breitweiser*, the court pointed out:

> If a recidivist statute permitted enhancement based on proof of underlying conduct, however, factual questions could arise as to exactly what conduct the defendant engaged in. Typically, such factual questions are within the province of a jury and this Court doubts that the Supreme Court would construe *Almendarez-Torres* as applying to such situations.

220 F. Supp. 2d 1374, 1379 (N.D. Ga. 2002). We agree that when an additional finding must be made beyond the bare fact that a prior conviction exists, the Sixth Amendment demands that a jury perform this task. That situation can arise for defendants whose F.2 factor depended upon a finding that a prior conviction reflected a crime

---

[26] 1993 Ariz. Sess. Laws ch. 153, § 1.

involving the use or threat of violence. None of the consolida defendants were sentenced under such a circumstance. Therefore, no of these cases involve a Sixth Amendment violation based on a judge's finding of one or more F.2 aggravating circumstances.

4. The Arizona Constitution.

¶69 This court has held that the Arizona Constitution's Sixth Amendment analog, Article II, Section 23,[27] provides substantially the same right to a jury trial as does the Sixth Amendment. *State v. Carlson*, 202 Ariz. 570, 577 ¶ 18, 48 P.3d 1180, 1187 (2002). Nevertheless, the defendants urge us to look to the Arizona Constitution to find a requirement that prior conviction aggravating circumstances must be found by a jury.

¶70 They point to two decisions. The first, *State v. Carlson*, rejected an argument that the Arizona constitutional right to an impartial jury provides greater protection than does the federal constitution against pretrial publicity affecting the jury pool. *Id.* at 576-77 ¶¶ 17-18, 48 P.3d at 1186-87. We stated that our constitution does not afford any greater protection to defendants against pretrial media coverage than does the federal constitution. *Id.* at 577 ¶ 18, 48 P.3d at 1187. The second case, *State ex rel. McDougall v. Strohson*, held that Arizona's Constitution traditionally provides greater access to jury trials than that required by the federal constitution. 190 Ariz. 120, 121-22, 945 P.2d 1251, 1252-53 (1997). Under the federal constitution, only crimes punishable by more than six months in jail must be tried by a jury. *Id.* at 122, 945 P.2d at

---

[27] That provision states:

> The right of trial by jury shall remain inviolate. Juries in criminal cases in which a sentence of death or imprisonment for thirty years or more is authorized by law shall consist of twelve persons. In all criminal cases the unanimous consent of the jurors shall be necessary to render a verdict. In all other cases, the number of jurors, not less than six, and the number required to render a verdict, shall be specified by law.

Ariz. Const. art. II, § 23.

1253. In instances in which a defendant can be sentenced to less than six months in jail, in contrast, our constitution demands a jury trial if "the moral quality of the act charged, and its relationship to common law crimes" requires that a jury determine guilt.[28] *Id.*

¶71 In relying on these decisions, the defendants overlook the distinction between jury impartiality or jury access issues and the *Apprendi/Ring* issue. The *Carlson* case rejected an expansive interpretation of the Arizona Constitution because we were unwilling to move beyond federal precedent in this area. Our holding in *Strohson* means only that a defendant is entitled to a jury trial for certain minor crimes for which the federal constitution does not require a jury trial.

¶72 Under these facts, then, we hold that Article II, Section 23 provides substantially the same jury trial right as does the Sixth Amendment.

B.
Can the Finding of an Aggravating Circumstance Be Implicit in the Jury's Verdict of Conviction?

¶73 We asked the parties to discuss whether any aggravating circumstance could necessarily derive from a jury's verdict of conviction for first degree murder, either standing alone or when considered in conjunction with other contemporaneous convictions. The State argues that pecuniary gain, A.R.S. section 13-703.F.5, other homicides committed during the commission of the offense, A.R.S. section 13-703.F.8, and age of victim less than fifteen years or seventy years or older, A.R.S. section 13-703.F.9, can logically inhere in a verdict. The defendants argue that an aggravating circumstance can never be implicit.

---

[28] For instance, we have held that the crimes of driving under the influence, *Rothweiler v. Superior Court*, 100 Ariz. 37, 410 P.2d 479 (1966), and possession of marijuana, *State ex rel. Dean v. Dolny*, 161 Ariz. 297, 778 P.2d 1193 (1989), require a jury trial even though they are punishable by less than six months in jail.

¶74 We hold that the pecuniary gain and multiple homicide aggravators usually are not implicit in a jury's verdict. However, the age of the victim can be implicit in the verdict, if the jury simultaneously convicts the defendant of an offense that includes the age of the murdered victim as an element of the crime.[29]

1. Pecuniary Gain.

¶75 Under A.R.S. section 13-703.F.5, an aggravating circumstance exists when a murder is committed "as consideration for the receipt, or in expectation of the receipt, of anything of pecuniary value." A.R.S. § 13-703.F.5. To establish the pecuniary gain aggravating circumstance, the state must prove that the murder would not have occurred but for the defendant's pecuniary motive. *State v. Harding*, 137 Ariz. 278, 296-97, 670 P.2d 283, 394-95 (1983).

¶76 Determining whether a defendant murdered his victim for pecuniary gain requires a highly fact-intensive inquiry. The state must establish the connection between the murder and motive through direct or strong circumstantial evidence. *State v. Cañez*, 202 Ariz. 133, 159 ¶ 94, 42 P.3d 564, 590 (2002) (holding murder of victim and only witness to robbery "is powerful circumstantial evidence of an intent to facilitate escape" and supports finding pecuniary motive); *State v. Gillies*, 135 Ariz. 500, 512, 662 P.2d 1007, 1019 (1983) ("Without some tangible evidence, or strong circumstantial inference, it is not for the sentencing court to conclude that because money and items were taken, the purpose of the murder was pecuniary gain.").

¶77 Complex fact situations require careful attention and analysis before a fact-finder confidently can conclude that pecuniary ends motivated the killing. When the state concurrently prosecutes a capital defendant for first degree murder and, for instance, robbery, both crimes resulting from the same occurrence, the state does not establish

---

[29] The 2002 amendment did not change the F.5 and F.8 aggravating circumstances. 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 1. It did, however, make a technical change to the F.9 factor. *Id.*

the pecuniary gain factor simply by showing that the robbery occurred. Rather, the state assumes the additional burden of showing that pecuniary gain was "a motive, cause, or impetus for the murder and not merely the result of the murder." *State v. Kayer*, 194 Ariz. 423, 433 ¶ 32, 984 P.2d 31, 41 (1999); *see, e.g., State v. Lee*, 185 Ariz. 549, 558, 917 P.2d 692, 701 (1996) (affirming pecuniary gain aggravating circumstance where defendant killed to facilitate escape after robbery).

¶78 The pecuniary gain factor thus requires more than the jury's conviction of a defendant for first degree murder and robbery or burglary. The fact-finder must draw the separate conclusion that the defendant killed, at least in part, for pecuniary motive. For that reason, we cannot conclude that a jury finding of pecuniary gain inheres in its robbery or burglary verdict.

¶79 Therefore, we will apply a harmless error analysis to the pecuniary gain factor. In those instances in which no reasonable jury could find that the state failed to prove a pecuniary gain motive beyond a reasonable doubt, we will find harmless error affecting that factor. In other instances, we will consider whether the *Ring II* error requires that we remand for resentencing.

2. Multiple Homicides.

¶80 A.R.S. section 13-703.F.8 permits a judge to find an aggravating circumstance if "[t]he defendant has been convicted of one or more other homicides, as defined in § 13-1101, that were committed during the commission of the offense." A.R.S. § 13-703.F.8. As with the pecuniary gain factor, this factor requires the state to establish more than that the jury convicted the defendant of first degree murder and one or more other homicides occurring around the same time. Instead, all homicides must take place during "one continuous course of criminal conduct." *State v. Rogovich*, 188 Ariz. 38, 45, 932 P.2d 794, 801 (1997) (quoting *State v. Ramirez*, 178 Ariz. 116, 130, 871 P.2d 237, 251 (1994)). This conclusion can be drawn only after the fact-finder analyzes "the temporal, spatial, and motivational relationships between the capital homicide and the collateral [homicide], as well as

. . . the nature of that [homicide] and the identity of its victim." *Id.* (quoting *State v. Lavers*, 168 Ariz. 376, 393, 814 P.2d 333, 350 (1991)).

¶81 A jury verdict convicting a defendant of two or more homicides does not in itself establish the multiple homicide aggravating circumstance. Without a finding that the murders are temporally, spatially and motivationally related, the bare jury verdict does not implicitly support the F.8 aggravator. *Id.*

¶82 We will find harmless error affecting this factor in those cases in which no reasonable jury could find that the state failed to prove the F.8 factor beyond a reasonable doubt. In other instances, we will consider whether the *Ring II* error requires that we remand for resentencing.

3. Age of Victim.

¶83 Under A.R.S. section 13-703.F.9, an aggravating circumstance exists when, at the time the murder was committed, "[t]he defendant was an adult . . . or tried as an adult and the murdered person was under fifteen years of age or was seventy years of age or older." A.R.S. § 13-703.F.9. The statute is straightforward; the ages of the offender and victim invoke the aggravator. *Medina*, 193 Ariz. at 511 ¶ 23, 975 P.2d at 101 (holding this aggravating circumstance does not require further finding that the defendant was aware of the victim's age). The F.9 finding is implicit in the jury's verdict if the jury convicts the defendant of first degree murder and another crime committed against the murder victim in which the age of the victim constitutes a substantive element of the crime.

¶84 In some instances, Arizona's criminal code defines crimes based on the young age of the victim. For example, a person commits child molestation "by intentionally or knowingly engaging in or causing a person to engage in sexual contact, except sexual contact with the female breast, with a child under fifteen years of age." A.R.S. § 13-1410.A (2001).

¶85 Because the victim's age constitutes a substantive element of certain criminal offenses, a conviction necessarily reflects a jury determination that the victim was less than fifteen years old. The jury will have already found the necessary fact, age of the victim, through criminal proceedings compliant with Sixth Amendment safeguards. *Apprendi*, 530 U.S. at 488, 120 S. Ct. at 2362. Under these circumstances, the jury's implicit finding of the victim's age satisfies the F.9 aggravating circumstance.

¶86 If the trial judge found the F.9 factor and the jury also convicted the defendant of an age-dependent crime committed against the murder victim, we will find any *Ring II* error harmless. Other circumstances that may involve harmless error include, for example, those instances in which the defendant stipulated to the age of the victim or in which overwhelming evidence establishes the victim's age. In other instances, we will consider whether the *Ring II* error requires that we remand for resentencing.

C.
If One Aggravating Factor Was Not Subject to *Ring II*, Was Implicitly Found by the Jury or it Was Otherwise Obvious that One Aggravator Has Been Established Beyond a Reasonable Doubt,Is There Need for Resentencing?

¶87 The State asserts that if the jury implicitly found one aggravating factor or the trial judge found one factor not subject to the *Ring II* analysis, we can uphold the capital sentence imposed by the trial judge as harmless error. The argument relies upon the fact that Arizona's superseded sentencing scheme rendered a defendant "death eligible" if one aggravating factor existed. *Ring I*, 200 Ariz. at 279 ¶ 42, 25 P.3d at 1151. Nothing in *Ring II*, the State argues, prevents a trial judge from finding the second and succeeding aggravating factors, as well as finding mitigating factors and balancing them against the aggravator.

¶88 A narrow reading of *Ring II* may permit a judge to decide the existence of additional aggravating factors in the circumstances

described by the State. As the State contends, once the government establishes any aggravating factor, a defendant becomes "death eligible" in the strict sense, and establishing additional aggravating factors does not render a defendant "more" death eligible. In our view, however, *Ring II* should not be read that narrowly. Although the Court there considered a death sentence based upon the existence of a single aggravating factor, we conclude that *Ring II* requires a jury to consider all aggravating factors urged by the state and not either exempt from *Ring II*, implicit in the jury's verdict, or otherwise established beyond a reasonable doubt.

¶89 Another factor leads us to conclude that we should not adopt the State's argument. As is evident, the procedures urged by the State do not reflect any sentencing procedure ever adopted by our legislature. In both the superseded and current capital sentencing schemes, the legislature assigned to the same fact-finder responsibility for considering both aggravating and mitigating factors, as well as for determining whether the mitigating factors, when compared with the aggravators, call for leniency. Neither a judge, under the superseded statutes, nor the jury, under the new statutes, can impose the death penalty unless that entity concludes that the mitigating factors are not sufficiently substantial to call for leniency. A.R.S. §§ 13- 703.E (Supp. 2002) and 13-703.F (Supp. 2001). The process involved in determining whether mitigating factors prohibit imposing the death penalty plays an important part in Arizona's capital sentencing scheme. We will not speculate about how the State's proposal would impact this essential process. *Clemons v. Mississippi*, 494 U.S. 738, 754, 110 S. Ct. 1441, 1451 (1990) ("In some situations, a state appellate court may conclude that peculiarities in a case make appellate . . . harmless error analysis extremely speculative or impossible."); *see also Johnson v. Nevada*, 59 P.3d 450 (Nev. 2002)(as applied to Nevada law, *Ring II* requires jury to weigh mitigating and aggravating factors under Nevada's statute requiring the fact-finder to further find whether mitigating circumstances are sufficient to outweigh the aggravating circumstances).

¶90 We therefore hold that the presence of one or more aggravating factors either exempt from *Ring II*, inherent in the jury's guilty verdict, or otherwise established beyond a reasonable doubt does not, in itself, establish that a defendant's capital sentence resulted from harmless error.

D.

Does *Ring II* Require Resentencing if a Defendant Conceded or Did Not Challenge the Aggravating Factors Found by the Trial Court?

¶91 The State contends that if a defendant stipulates to facts sufficient to establish an aggravating factor or fails to challenge one or more aggravating circumstances, that factor stands. The failure renders error harmless and essentially establishes overwhelming, undisputed proof of that factor's existence. The defendants argue that neither concession nor failure to contest waives a defendant's right to a jury trial on aggravating factors. Substantial differences exist between a defendant's decision to concede an aggravating circumstance and a defendant's decision not to contest an aggravating circumstance, and we distinguish between those situations.

¶92 In *United States v. Cotton*, the Supreme Court reviewed a case in which the defendant did not contest an element responsible for his sentence enhancement. 535 U.S. 625, 122 S. Ct. 1781 (2002). The issue was whether *Apprendi* required vacating an enhanced sentence under a federal narcotics criminal statute when the government failed to include in the indictment the amount of cocaine, a fact essential to justifying the enhanced sentence. *Id.* at ___, ___ n.3, 122 S. Ct. at 1783, 1786 n.3. After examining for plain error, the Court found no reversible error under *Apprendi* because the government presented overwhelming and essentially uncontroverted evidence of the amount of cocaine base at trial. *Id.* at ___ & n.3, 122 S. Ct. at 1786 & n.3; *see also United States v. Smith*, 282 F.3d 758, 771-72 (9th Cir. 2002) (holding *Apprendi* error harmless where defendant failed to contradict evidence establishing drug quantity or object to jury instruction stating threshold

drug quantity need not be found); *Robinson v. United States*, 129 F. Supp. 2d 627, 632 (S.D.N.Y. 2001) (holding failure to submit drug quantity issue to jury did not prejudice defendant when he did not challenge the amount).

¶93 In cases in which a defendant stipulates, confesses or admits to facts sufficient to establish an aggravating circumstance, we will regard that factor as established. Our harmless error inquiry then focuses on whether no reasonable jury could find that the mitigation evidence adduced during the penalty phase is "sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." A.R.S. §13-703.E. Unless we conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that a jury would impose a death sentence, we must remand the case for resentencing. *See Id.* § 13-703.E; *Neder v. United States*, 527 U.S. 1, 19, 119 S. Ct. 1827, 1838 (1999); *State v. Bible*, 175 Ariz. 549, 588, 858 P.2d 1152, 1191 (1993). See *infra*, Section VIII.

¶94 When a defendant simply fails to challenge an aggravating circumstance at the penalty phase, the state retains the burden of proving the aggravator's existence beyond a reasonable doubt. *See State v. Spreitz*, 190 Ariz. 129, 147, 945 P.2d 1260, 1278 (1997). Our inquiry then becomes whether the state has met its burden. If reasonable doubt exists as to this factor, then we must consider remanding for resentencing.

E.

Can the State Raise Harmless Error if It Did Not Make That Argument Below?

¶95 The defendants argue that the State waived its harmless error argument by failing to raise it prior to this stage of litigation. We disagree. Until the Supreme Court overruled *Walton v. Arizona*, the State had no reason to argue that failure to obtain jury findings as to aggravating factors constituted error at all. *Lockhart v. Fretwell*, 506 U.S. 364, 369 n.2, 113 S. Ct. 838, 842 n.2 (1993) ("Harmless-error analysis is triggered only *after* the reviewing court discovers that an error has been committed."). Only after the Court defined constitutional

error in Arizona's sentencing procedure did the question whether such error was harmless arise. We will not penalize the State for failing to anticipate the Court's holding in *Ring II*.

¶96 Moreover, the Arizona Constitution imposes an independent obligation on the state judiciary not to reverse a case "for technical error in pleadings or proceedings when upon the whole case it shall appear that substantial justice has been done." Ariz. Const. art. VI, § 27 (2001); *accord* A.R.S. § 13-3987 (2001). If error is harmless, in these or other cases, substantial justice has been done.

F.

Does the Sixth Amendment Require the Jury to Make *Enmund-Tison* Findings in Capital Felony Murder Cases?

¶97 In cases of first degree felony murder convictions, an *Enmund-Tison* finding must be made to satisfy the Eighth Amendment's proportionality standard. *Tison v. Arizona*, 481 U.S. 137, 107 S. Ct. 1676 (1987); *Enmund v. Florida*, 458 U.S. 782, 102 S. Ct. 3368 (1982). In Arizona, the trial judge makes this finding. *See State v. Greenway*, 170 Ariz. 155, 171, 823 P.2d 22, 38 (1991). The defendants argue that *Ring II* requires that *Enmund-Tison* findings be made by a jury. We hold that the Sixth Amendment principles of *Apprendi/Ring* do not require a jury to make *Enmund-Tison* findings.

¶98 The Eighth Amendment's Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause prohibits "all punishments which by their excessive length or severity are greatly disproportioned to the offenses charged."[30] *Weems v. United States*, 217 U.S. 349, 371, 30 S. Ct. 544, 551 (1910) (quoting *O'Neil v. Vermont*, 144 U.S. 323, 339-40, 12 S. Ct. 693, 699-700 (1892) (Field, J., dissenting)). In capital punishment terms, the Eighth

---

[30] "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." U.S. Const. amend. VIII. The Eighth Amendment applies to the states through the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. *Robinson v. California*, 370 U.S. 660, 666, 82 S. Ct. 1417, 1420 (1962).

Amendment requires courts to consider carefully death sentences imposed on defendants convicted of felony murder. In *Enmund v. Florida* and *Tison v. Arizona*, the Supreme Court imposed Eighth Amendment cruel and unusual punishment restraints in capital felony murder cases. The Court held that Eighth Amendment principles forbid a state from sentencing to death a defendant "who aids and abets a felony in the course of which a murder is committed by others but who does not himself kill, attempt to kill, or intend that a killing take place or that lethal force will be employed." *Enmund*, 458 U.S. at 797, 102 S. Ct. at 3376. Five years later, in *Tison*, the Court refined its prior decision by holding that "major participation in the felony committed, combined with reckless indifference to human life, is sufficient to satisfy the *Enmund* culpability requirement." 481 U.S. at 158, 107 S. Ct. at 1688.

¶99 The Supreme Court already has addressed the question whether a jury must make *Enmund-Tison* findings. In *Cabana v. Bullock*, the Court held that the federal constitution does not require a jury to determine a defendant's level of culpability in capital felony murder cases. 474 U.S. 376, 385, 106 S. Ct. 689, 696 (1986). Foreshadowing its recent Sixth Amendment decisions, the Court distinguished *Enmund* from the statutorily defined elements of a substantive offense at issue in *Apprendi*:

> [O]ur ruling in *Enmund* does not concern the guilt or innocence of the defendant—it *establishes no new elements of the crime of murder that must be found by the jury.* Rather, as the Fifth Circuit itself has recognized, *Enmund* "does not affect the state's definition of any substantive offense, even a capital offense." *Enmund* holds only that the principles of proportionality embodied in the Eighth Amendment bar imposition of the death penalty upon a class of persons who may nonetheless be guilty of the crime of capital murder as defined by state law: that is, the class of murderers who did not themselves kill, attempt to kill, or intend to kill.

Id. (citation and footnote omitted)(emphasis added).

¶100 We conclude that this distinction withstands *Apprendi* and *Ring II*. *Enmund-Tison* findings affect sentencing very differently than do findings of aggravating circumstances. Even if a jury is satisfied that the state has established all statutory elements for capital felony murder, including aggravating circumstances, the judge must remove the defendant from the class of defendants otherwise death-eligible if she cannot make *Enmund-Tison* findings. The question is not whether the state has met its burden but whether, given a defendant's culpable mental state, the government can impose capital punishment consistent with the Eighth Amendment's proportionality threshold. That determination involves not a Sixth Amendment jury trial right but rather an Eighth Amendment proportionality analysis, traditionally the prerogative of the judge. As the *Cabana* Court stated:

> [T]he decision whether a sentence is so disproportionate as to violate the Eighth Amendment in any particular case, like other questions bearing on whether a criminal defendant's constitutional rights have been violated, has long been viewed as one that a trial judge or an appellate court is fully competent to make.

Id. at 386, 106 S. Ct. at 697.

¶101 The difference between aggravating circumstances as substantive elements of a greater offense and the *Enmund-Tison* findings as a restraint on capital sentencing dictates our decision that *Apprendi/Ring* does not require these findings to be made by the jury. *Id.* The Sixth Amendment assigns to the jury responsibility for determining whether all statutory criminal elements exist. Therefore, a defendant cannot receive a particular sentence unless a jury finds all the elements of the offense charged. *Id.* at 384, 106 S. Ct. at 696 (citing *Duncan v. Louisiana*, 391 U.S. 145, 88 S. Ct. 1444 (1968)). The *Enmund-Tison* findings, on the other hand, operate as a judicially crafted instrument used to measure proportionality between a defendant's criminal culpability and the sentence imposed. These two

rules of law are conceptually and constitutionally distinct. We hold that the Sixth Amendment does not require that a jury, rather than a judge, make *Enmund- Tison* findings.

VIII.

Conclusion.

¶102 Our review of aggravating circumstances will produce one of several results. In some of these consolidated cases, our review will not allow the conclusion, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the error did not contribute to or affect the capital sentence. In those cases, we must remand for resentencing.

¶103 Other cases will involve aggravators that we will regard as established. In some of those cases, the aggravating factors fall outside the *Ring II* analysis. Others will involve aggravating factors that inhere in the jury's verdict or to which a defendant stipulated. In yet other instances, the evidence presented at trial and the sentencing hearing may be sufficiently overwhelming that we will conclude no reasonable jury would have failed to find the factor established beyond a reasonable doubt. Even in these instances, however, one further determination can affect our harmless error analysis.

¶104 Arizona's statutes require more than the presence of one or more statutorily defined aggravating factors to impose the death penalty:

> In determining whether to impose a sentence of death or life imprisonment, the trier of fact shall take into account the aggravating and mitigating circumstances that have been proven. The trier of fact shall impose a sentence of death if the trier of fact finds one or more of the aggravating circumstances enumerated in subsection F of this section *and then determines that there are no mitigating circumstances sufficiently substantial to call for leniency.*

A.R.S. § 13-703.E (emphasis added);[31] *see also Id.* § 13-703.01.H. Because a trier of fact must determine whether mitigating circumstances call for leniency, we will affirm a capital sentence only if we conclude, beyond a reasonable doubt, that no rational trier of fact would determine that the mitigating circumstances were sufficiently substantial to call for leniency. If we cannot reach that conclusion, we must find reversible error and remand the case for resentencing. In separate opinions, we will consider individually the sentences of these defendants, applying the standards set forth in this opinion.

Ruth V. McGregor, Vice Chief Justice

CONCURRING:

Rebecca White Berch, Justice
Michael D. Ryan, Justice

F E L D M A N, Justice (Retired), concurring in part and dissenting in part:

¶105 I dissent from Part VI of the majority opinion because I cannot agree that the complete absence of the jury in the separate capital sentencing proceeding that determines a defendant's eligibility for the death penalty is reviewable for harmless error. In my view, the denial of a jury in the sentencing phase is a defect in the fundamental mechanism of the trial and is therefore structural error; thus the death sentence should be vacated. This is not only required by logic but is the teaching of a long line of our cases.

¶106 We have just recently held, for instance, that the erroneous exclusion for cause of prospective jurors was structural error that required reversal. *State v. Anderson*, 197 Ariz. 314, 324, ¶ 23, 4 P.3d 369, 379, ¶ 23 (2000). To hold otherwise and review for harmless error

---

[31] The legislature's post-*Ring II* amendments to section 13-703 replaced "court" with "trier of fact," referring to the jury or, in cases of a waiver of trial by jury, the court. 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th Spec. Sess., ch. 1, § 1.

would lead us "down a slippery slope that could be used to justify overlooking every structural error [such as] denial of a jury trial or the right to counsel." *Id.* at 323, ¶¶ 21-22, 4 P.3d at 378, ¶¶ 21-22; *see also State v. Henley*, 141 Ariz. 465, 469, 687 P.2d 1220, 1224 (1984) (structural error to try defendant to eight-person jury when constitution guaranteed twelve-person jury for crime charged); *State v. Luque*, 171 Ariz. 198, 200, 829 P.2d 1244, 1246 (App. 1992) (trial to wrong number of jurors is fundamental, structural error).

¶107 If, as we have held, it is fundamental and structural error erroneously to exclude potential jurors or try a defendant to an insufficient number of jurors, it is difficult to see how deprivation of trial by jury at the capital sentencing phase can be less erroneous. The reason is plain: it is simply impossible to predict what a jury would have done if one had been impaneled. *State v. Smith*, 197 Ariz. 333, 339-40, 4 P.3d 388, 394-95 (App. 1999). Appellate review of such error is not "like measuring the effect of erroneous evidentiary rulings against the overall weight of properly admitted evidence. Errors involving the composition of the court or jury affect the legitimacy of the entire proceeding, leaving nothing to measure or weigh and requiring reversal." *Anderson*, 197 Ariz. at 323, ¶ 22, 4 P.3d 378, ¶ 22. The error in these cases is unlike trial errors, which can be "quantitatively assessed in the context" of all the evidence. *Arizona v. Fulminante*, 499 U.S. 279, 307, 111 S. Ct. 1246, 1264 (1991).

¶108 The majority concludes, however, that the failure to submit any part of the determination of aggravating circumstances to a jury was not structural error. Op. at ¶ 44. I cannot agree. As the majority explains, in capital sentencing prior to *Ring II*, the trial proceeded in two phases, a guilt phase and a sentencing phase. Op. at ¶¶ 7-13. The first, before a jury, was concerned only with the question of conviction or acquittal of the crime of first degree murder. The second, tried to the court under Arizona's prior sentencing statute, was concerned only with the issue of aggravating factors and mitigating circumstances. Each phase was tried to different factfinders on different issues. The Supreme Court, in these circumstances, has held that the sentencing phase resembles a separate trial, so much so that the double jeopardy clause applies both

to the guilt phase and the sentencing phase. *See, e.g., Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668, 686-87, 104 S. Ct. 2052, 2064 (1984); *Bullington v. Missouri*, 451 U.S. 430, 101 S. Ct. 1852, 1862 (1981) (double jeopardy protection attaches to capital sentencing proceeding); *Arizona v. Rumsey*, 467 U.S. 203, 209, 104 S. Ct. 2305, 2309 (1984) (Arizona capital sentencing proceedings resemble a trial for purposes of the double jeopardy clause). This was our view also. *See State v. Rumsey*, 136 Ariz. 166, 665 P.2d 48 (1983).

¶109 Complete denial of trial by jury at the sentencing phase, therefore, would seem to preclude harmless error analysis. The right to trial by jury is "fundamental to the American scheme of justice." *Duncan v. Louisiana*, 391 U.S. 145, 149, 88 S. Ct. 1444, 1447 (1968). The Supreme Court has now held defendants were entitled to a jury at the sentencing phase to determine the existence of the alleged aggravating factors but were denied that constitutional right. *Ring v. Arizona* 536 U.S., ___, ___, 122 S. Ct. 2428, 2443 (2002) *(Ring II)*. As noted, in Arizona denial of a jury trial is structural error. The same rule obtains in the federal system. *Sullivan v. Louisiana*, 508 U.S. 275, 281-282, 113 S. Ct. 2078, 2083 (1993) (the deprivation of the right to a jury trial unquestionably qualifies as structural error).

¶110 The majority rejects this conclusion and supports its decision on the basis of *Neder v. United States*, 527 U.S. 1, 119 S. Ct. 1927 (1999). Op. at ¶ 44. But *Neder* and the cases that rely on it are cases of trial error, not error in the structure or mechanism of the trial. Neder was tried to a jury which was present during the entire trial. The error consisted of the trial judge failing to instruct the jury on materiality, one of the elements of the crime of tax fraud. The difference is that in *Neder*, the jury was presented with all of the evidence, and the issue of materiality was uncontested. *Neder*, 527 U.S. at 15, 119 S. Ct. at 1836. The Supreme Court held this was trial error, reviewable under a harmless error analysis. *Id.*

¶111 The present cases are different. Unlike *Neder*, the error in these cases did not occur during the presentation of the case to the jury. Instead, the error was the complete absence of the jury during the

penalty phase of the trial. The jury in Ring's trial heard no evidence, nor was it asked to make findings of any kind on the aggravating circumstances of the crime. And, even if such evidence may have been introduced at the guilt phase, it was not considered by a jury in the context of the death penalty. As a consequence, a jury verdict was never returned in these cases on the greater offense of capital murder. Thus, there is simply "no object, so to speak, upon which harmless-error scrutiny can operate." *Sullivan*, 508 U.S. at 280, 113 S. Ct. at 2082.

¶112 To apply harmless error review in these consolidated cases would encourage the court to speculate that reversal is not necessary because the non-existent jury would have convicted the defendant in any event. The court, in other words, would transform itself into a phantom jury. The argument is not supportable.

¶113 In these consolidated cases, the majority must concede that the jury was erroneously discharged before the trial was completed. If this permits harmless error review, then, one must suppose, we would also review for harmless error if the trial judge directed a verdict for the state on one or more elements of the charge, granted summary judgment on an element, or discharged the jury after it had determined some but not all of the charges. Such results are also unsupportable, in my view. "The Sixth Amendment requires more than appellate speculation about a hypothetical jury's action, or else directed verdicts for the State would be sustainable on appeal; it requires an actual jury finding of guilty." *Id.*

¶114 Today's opinion puts the majority in the position of speculating about one of the great unknowables — what a nonexistent jury would have done. We might argue about whether some or any degree of accuracy can be obtained by such speculation, but the argument is irrelevant. Both the state and federal constitutions guarantee defendants the right to trial by jury — not for one-half of the trial, not for two-thirds, fourfifths, or nine-tenths of the trial but for the whole trial. When the jury trial guarantee is violated, I believe structural error has occurred. The Constitution does not then permit judges to conclude the error was harmless; it requires the court to conclude that the trial

mechanism violated the Constitution and the result should not be affirmed.

Stanley G. Feldman, Justice (Retired)

¶115 I concur in all but Part VI of the majority opinion and join in Justice Feldman's dissent as to that part.

Charles E. Jones, Chief Justice

(2)

No. 03-518

Supreme Court, U.S.
FILED
NOV 18 2003
OFFICE OF THE CLERK

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

October Term, 2003

STATE OF ARIZONA,

Petitioner,

v.

ARTURO ANDA CANEZ

Respondent.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

MOTION FOR LEAVE TO PROCEED *IN FORMA PAUPERIS*

Pursuant to Rule 39, Rules of the Supreme Court, Respondent, Arturo Anda Canez, hereby moves for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* in the above-captioned action on the ground that he lacks sufficient funds to pay for fees and expenses. An affidavit by Petitioner declaring his indigency is attached to the motion. [*See* Attached Exhibit A.]

Petitioner is incarcerated under a sentence of death in the Special Management Unit I, Arizona State Prison Complex - Eyman in Florence, Arizona. Petitioner has been declared indigent and has been appointed counsel in the State of Arizona. For these reasons, Petitioner asks that this Court grant this motion and allow him to proceed *in forma pauperis*.

///

Respectfully submitted this 17 day of November, 2003.

THOMAS J. PHALEN, ESQ.
TARA K. ALLEN, ESQ.

By: Thomas J. Phalen
Thomas J. Phalen (Counsel of Record)
Attorney for Respondent Canez

No. 03-518

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

October Term, 2003

STATE OF ARIZONA,

Petitioner,

v.

ARTURO ANDA CANEZ

Respondent.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

AFFIDAVIT OF INDIGENCY

I, Arturo Anda Canez, being first duly sworn, do depose and state that in support of my brief in opposition to Arizona's Petition for Writ of Certiorari without being required to prepay fees, costs or give security therefor, I state that because of my poverty I am unable to pay the costs of said proceeding or to give security therefor; that I believe I am entitled to redress.

I further swear that the responses which I have made to the questions and instructions below relating to my ability to pay the cost of petitioning for a Writ of Certiorari are true.

1. Are you presently employed? No.

A. If the answer is yes, state the amount of your salary or wages per month and give the name and address of your employer. N/A

B. If the answer is no, state the date of your last employment and the amount of the salary or wages per month which you received. I have not been employed since 1996, when I was incarcerated prior to my capital trial. I have been incarcerated since that date and am presently on Arizona's death row.

2. Have you received within the past twelve months any income from a business, profession or other form of self-employment, or in the form of rent payments, interest, dividends, or other sources? No.

A. If the answer is yes, describe each source of income and state the amount received from each during the past twelve months. N/A

3. Do you own any cash or checking or savings account? No.

A. If the answer is yes, state the total value of the items owned. N/A

4. Do you own any real estate, stocks, bonds, notes, automobiles or other valuable property excluding ordinary household furniture and clothing? No.

A. If the answer is yes, describe the property and state its approximate value. N/A

5. List the persons who are dependent upon you for support and state your relationship to those persons. My wife and children do not receive any support from me as I am on death row in Arizona.

I understand that a false statement or answer to any question in this affidavit will subject me to penalties for perjury.

OFFICIAL SEAL
BARBARA SHEARER
NOTARY PUBLIC - State of Arizona
PINAL COUNTY
My Comm. Expires May 15, 2007

Arturo Canez
ARTURO ANDA CANEZ

Duly witnessed and sworn before me, a Notary Public, this 13 day of Nov., 2003.

Barbara Shearer
NOTARY PUBLIC

No. 03-518

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

October Term, 2003

STATE OF ARIZONA,

Petitioner,

v.

ARTURO ANDA CANEZ

Respondent.

ON PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

RESPONDENT'S BRIEF IN OPPOSITION

THOMAS J. PHALEN, ESQ.
(Counsel of Record)
45 W. Jefferson #506
Phoenix, Arizona 85003
(602) 258-4044
(602) 258-7408 (FAX)

TARA K. ALLEN, ESQ.
903 S. Rural Rd., Suite 101-106
Tempe, Arizona 85281-2029
(800) 317-1682
(406) 837-2086 (FAX)

ATTORNEYS FOR RESPONDENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES iii

QUESTIONS PRESENTED 1

JURISDICTION 2

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED 2

STATEMENT OF THE CASE 2

I. Arizona Capital Punishment Law After *Ring v. Arizona* 2

II. Respondent's Case 3

A. Mr. Canez' Traumatic Childhood and Dysfunctional Family 3

B. Mr. Canez' Other Mitigation Evidence 4

C. The Crime 6

D. The Capital Trial and Sentencing 6
1. The Mitigating Evidence 6
2. The Aggravating Factors 7
3. The Judge's Sentencing Decision 7

E. The Direct Appeal 7

F. Canez II 8

REASONS FOR DENYING THE WRIT 9

I. THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT VACATED THE DEATH SENTENCE ON THE ALTERNATIVE GROUND THAT CANEZ IS MENTALLY RETARDED AND THEREFORE IMMUNE FROM THE DEATH PENALTY UNDER *ATKINS V. VIRGINIA*. 9

II. THIS COURT DENIED CERTIORARI IN *ARIZONA V. PANDELI*, WHICH RAISED THE PRECISE QUESTIONS RAISED IN THIS CASE. 10

III. THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT'S DECISION RESTS ON AN INTERPRETATION OF STATE PROCEDURAL LAW, AND REACHES A RESULT THIS COURT SAID WAS PERMISSIBLE IN *CLEMONS V. MISSISSIPPI*. 10

IV. THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT'S DISPOSITION OF THIS CASE CAN AND SHOULD BE AFFIRMED ON OTHER GROUNDS. 15

A. Denial of the Jury Trial Right Guaranteed by *Ring* is Structural Error That Should Not be Subject to Harmless Error Review. 15

B. The Jury Trial Right Recognized in *Ring* Properly Applies to Aggravating Factors Involving Convictions for Other Criminal Conduct: *Almendarez-Torres* Should be Overruled. 16

C. The Jury Trial Right Recognized in *Ring* Properly Applies to the Aggravation/Mitigation Balance in States Which Make That Assessment an Eligibility Factor. 18

D. The Logic of *Ring II*, and Developments Since *Ring II*, Make it Apparent That Judge Only Capital Sentencing is Unconstitutional Under the Sixth, Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments, and *Spaziano* and *Cabana* Should be Overruled. 19

E. The Arizona Courts Violated *Lockett v. Ohio* and *Eddings v. Oklahoma* By Disregarding Mitigating Evidence Where It Is Not Shown To Cause The Defendant's Conduct At The Time Of The Crime. 20

1. Evidence of a Traumatic Family and Developmental History Is Relevant Mitigating Evidence. 20

2. The Arizona Courts Flatly Refuse to Recognize This Court's Prior Holdings That a Traumatic Upbringing Is Mitigating Evidence. 22

CONCLUSION 25

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page

Cases:

Almendarez-Torres v. United States, 523 U.S. 224 (1998) 16, 17

Apprendi v. New Jersey, 530 U.S. 466 (2000) 16, 17

Arizona v. Evans, 514 U.S. 1, 7 (1995) 12

Arizona v. Fulminante, 499 U.S. 279, 282 (1991) 15

Arizona v. Pandeli, Case No. 03-15, on October 14, 2003 10

Atkins v. Virginia, 536 U.S. 304 (2002) 9, 19, 25

Burger v. Kemp, 483 U.S. 776, 789 (1987) 20

Cabana v. Bullock, 474 U.S. 376 (1986) 19

California v. Brown, 497 U.S. 538, 545 (1987) 21

Canez I, State v. Canez, 202 Ariz. 133, 42 P.3d 564 (2002) 6-8

Canez II, State v. Canez, ___ Ariz. ___, 74 P.3d 932 (2003) 6-11

Clemons v. Mississippi, 494 U.S. 738, 754 (1990) 10, 12, 14, 15

Coleman v. Thompson, 501 U.S. 722, 730 (1991) 12

Eddings v. Oklahoma, 455 U.S. 104, 115 (1982) 20-22, 24, 25

Enmund v. Florida, 458 U.S. 782, 789 (1982) 19

Gregg v. Georgia, 428 U.S. 153 (1976) 19

Johnson v. Nevada, 59 P.3d 450 (Nev. 2002) 11

Lockett v. Ohio, 438 U.S. 586, 604 (1978) 20-22, 25

Michigan v. Long, 463 U.S. 1032, 1041 (1983) 12

Penry v. Lynaugh, 492 U.S. 302, 322 (1989) 20-22, 24, 25

People v. Dunlap, 975 P.2d 723 (Colo. 1999) 15

Ring II, Ring v. Arizona, 536 U.S. 584 (2002) 1, 8, 10-12, 14-19

Ring III, State v. Ring, 65 P.3d 915, 933-936 (Ariz. 2003) 3, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16

Rose v. Clark, 478 U.S. 570, 578 (1986) 15

Santosky v. Kramer, 455 U.S. 745 (1982) 21

Spaziano v. Florida, 468 U.S. 447 (1984) 19

State v. Brookover, 601 P.2d 1322, 1326 (Ariz. 1979) 13

State v. Hoskins, 14 P.3d at 1031 ..... 21, 23

State v. Laird, 186 Ariz. 203, 920 P.2d 769 (1996) 23

State v. Mann, 188 Ariz. 220, 231, 934 P.2d 784, 795 (1997) 23

State v. Mauro, 766 P.2d 59, 81 (Ariz. 1988) 13

State v. McKinney, 917 P.2d 1214, 1225 (Ariz. 1996) 13, 23

State v. Murray (Robert), 184 Ariz. 9, 906 P.2d. 542 (1995) 23

State v. Richmond, 886 P.2d 1329 (1994) 12

State v. Ross, 180 Ariz. 598, 886 P.2d 1354 (1994), *cert. denied*, 516 U.S. 878 (1995) 23

State v. Rossi, 154 Ariz. 245, 250-51, 741 P.2d 1223 (1987) 4

State v. Sansing, 26 P.23d 1118, 1131 (2001) 23

State v. Sharp, 193 Ariz. 414, 973 P.2d 1171 (1999) 23

State v. Valencia, 645 P.2d 239, 241 (Ariz. 1982) 3, 13

State v. Van Adams, 984 P.2d 16, 29 (Ariz. 1999) 13

State v. Walden, 905 P.2d 974, 994-995 (1995) 17, 23

Walton v. Arizona, 497 U.S. 639 (1990) 16, 23, 24

Williams (Terry) v. Taylor, 120 S.C. 1495, 1512-1514 (2000) 20

Woldt v. Martinez, 64 P.3d 256, 262 (Colo. 2003) 14, 15

Woodson v. North Carolina, 428 U.S. 280, 304 (1976) 21

Constitutional Provisions:

Eighth Amendment 2, 19

Fourteenth Amendment 19

Sixth Amendment 19

Tenth Amendment 2

State Statutes:

2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th S.S., Ch.1, § 7(A) 2

A.R.S. § 13-703 ..... 11, 23

A.R.S. § 13-703.01 2

A.R.S. § 13-703.02 9

A.R.S. § 13-703.02(A) 9

A.R.S. § 13-703(B)(1997) 6

A.R.S. § 13-703(E) 7, 8

A.R.S. § 13-703(F) 17

A.R.S. § 703(F)(5) 7

A.R.S. § 703(F)(6) 7

A.R.S. § 703(F)(9) 7

A.R.S. §13-703(F)(2) 7

Mont. Code Ann. § 46-18-301 19

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 29-2521 19

State Rules:

Rule 11, Arizona Rules of Criminal Procedure 5, 15

Rules of the Supreme Court:

Sup.Ct. R. 10 12

Miscellaneous:

Phyllis L. Crocker, *Childhood Abuse and Adult Murder: Implications For The Death Penalty*, 77 N.C.L.Rev 1143, 1185 (1999) 21

CAPITAL CASE

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

I. In *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584 (2002)(*Ring II*), this Court held that the Sixth Amendment requires that a jury decide all facts necessary to increase the maximum sentence in a murder case from life to death. Aggravating factors in Arizona act as the functional equivalent of elements of the aggravated crime of capital murder. Under Arizona law, a capital defendant may not be sentenced to the maximum sentence of death, even when one or more aggravating factors have been proved, unless a determination is made that the mitigation evidence is not "sufficiently substantial to warrant leniency."

II. Did the Arizona Supreme Court err when it held that the imposition of the death sentence was not harmless because it could not conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury would not have found that two of the aggravating factors in Respondent's case had been proved and that it could not conclude beyond a reasonable doubt "that no rational trier of fact would determine that the mitigating circumstances were sufficiently substantial to call for leniency."

III. Is the harmless error analysis of the imposition of a death sentence employed by the Arizona Supreme Court in post-*Ring* capital cases a matter of state law, not reviewable by this Court on petition for writ of certiorari?

JURISDICTION

Respondent urges that this Court lacks certiorari jurisdiction over questions of state law that the petition raises.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

In addition to the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments set forth in the petition, this case involves the Eighth and Tenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

The Eighth Amendment provides:

> Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

The Tenth Amendment provides:

> The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

I. Arizona Capital Punishment Law After *Ring v. Arizona*

Immediately after this Court's *Ring* decision, the Arizona legislature was convened in special session to enact a new death sentencing statute. That statute was expressly made applicable to all cases in which direct appeal had not been finally resolved. 2002 Ariz. Sess. Laws, 5th S.S., Ch.1, § 7(A). The statute provided for a jury determination of all issues relating to guilt and sentence: defendant's guilt of first degree murder, the presence of aggravating circumstances, and the existence of sufficient mitigating circumstances to outweigh the aggravating circumstances. A.R.S. § 13-703.01.

Shortly thereafter, the Arizona Supreme Court consolidated all capital cases before it on

direct appeal, including Mr. Canez', for argument in *Ring*. In its decision in that case, the Court held, contrary to consolidated appellants' arguments, violations of Ring's jury trial right could be held harmless. *State v. Ring*, 65 P.3d 915, 933-936 (Ariz. 2003)(*Ring III*). The Court held that a sentence could be affirmed on the theory that the error was harmless, if and only if the Court could conclude, that "no reasonable jury would have failed to find the factor established beyond a reasonable doubt" and "that no rational trier of fact would determine that the mitigating circumstances were sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." *Id.* at 946. This standard is substantially the same as Arizona's pre-*Ring* law regarding other forms of constitutional error in capital sentencing decisions by judges. *State v. Valencia*, 645 P.2d 239, 241 (Ariz. 1982)(refusing to affirm death sentence "[w]here there is a doubt whether the death sentence should be imposed"). However, it had another basis as well: the Arizona Supreme Court's determination that the legislature's intent would be frustrated if different sentencers evaluated the presence and strength of aggravation and mitigation. *Ring III*, 65 P.3d at 943; *see also State v. Bible*, 858 P.2d 1152, 1212 (1993)(expressing strong preference for remand where there is error in a capital sentence because fairness and accuracy are promoted by single factfinder who can consider all evidence).

II. Respondent's Case

A. Mr. Canez' Traumatic Childhood and Dysfunctional Family

Canez' family history included being chained to the family dining room table as a small boy because of an undiagnosed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Tr. 9/1/98 at 63), witnessing his father attempt suicide with a knife (*Id.* at 69), witnessing his father attempt to kill his mother (*Id.* at 71), among other horrors. The court found that these were proved but said his traumatic childhood and dysfunctional family history "*is* not *sufficiently connected* to his conduct at the time of the

offense to constitute a *substantial* relevant mitigating circumstance." (The court acknowledged in *rejecting* the mitigating evidence that Appellant had endured "violence, suicide, mental illness and poverty." (Tr. October 27, 1998 at 24)).

B. Mr. Canez' Other Mitigation Evidence

Appellant demonstrated that he was mentally retarded (Tr. 9/1/98 at 79; Tr. 10/2/98 at 47-48), suffered from seizures and took seizure control medication (Tr. 9/1/98 at 80: Tr. 10/2/98 at 47-48)), suffered a depressive disorder (Tr. 10/2/98 at 47-48) was education deprived and illiterate (10/2/98 at 34), showed evidence of organic brain damage (Tr. 10/2/98 at 37, 38, 47-48 and 104) for which further testing would likely have revealed structural damage (Tr. 10/2/98 at 110) and was likely a cocaine addict and intoxicated on alcohol and crack cocaine (Tr. 10/2/98 at 47-48) at the time of the offense.

The evidence demonstrated that Appellant consumed substantial quantities of alcohol and crack cocaine prior to the murder. Appellant was either severely intoxicated or experiencing severe craving. In *State v. Rossi*, 154 Ariz. 245, 250-51, 741 P.2d 1223 (1987), the Arizona Supreme Court noted that "addiction fosters an insatiable and life-controlling craving for additional drugs that overwhelms the user's ability to control his behavior." The Arizona Supreme Court has also correctly noted that cocaine "affects the mental state of a user . . . often producing a toxic psychosis, including bizarre mental states and abnormal behavior." *State v. Plew*, 155 Ariz. 44, 48, 745 P.2d 102, 106 (1987).

Canez raised and proved the following additional mitigating factors: felony murder instruction; good character; love of family; appropriate conduct in court; disparate sentence of co-defendant.

The co-defendant (Patterson) is the only person who admitted involvement in this crime. The co-defendant had a mental condition of sufficient severity that the *state* requested a Rule 11 mental competency examination of him, raising a reason for concern for his memory, credibility, reliability and sanity. The co-defendant had a drug problem of long duration for which he was in treatment or counseling. The co-defendant is white, Appellant is Hispanic. Co-defendant won the race to the prosecutor's office and was rewarded for it. The co-defendant's narration of the events changed substantially *three times* before he settled on the one that was presented at trial.[1] ("At trial, Patterson

---

[1]Patterson's testimony changed substantially with regard to the facts of the night of February 23, 1996 from one interview to the next, and his pretrial testimony also differed significantly from his testimony at trial. He testified that he believed that Detective Merchant "was trying to make a story fit into what he believed may have happened." (RT 01/28/98, 40.) He lied during the first interview about his overall involvement in the crime and about his extensive drug use on that day, during which he smoked crack cocaine twelve separate times. (RT 01/29/98, 48, 56-57; 87-88.) During his first interview with police, Patterson told them that the man he'd been with that night was a 5'6" Mexican male who weighed 250 lbs. (RT 01/29/98, 53.) Patterson stated that he had met Donna Thacker and Kathy Shepherd several times at the Triple X Bar and had seen them at the barn approximately two weeks prior to the night of February 23, 1996. However, both women testified that they had never seen Patterson before that night. (RT 01/29/98, 58-62.) Patterson lied about which clothes he was wearing the night of February 23, 1996. (RT 01/29/98, 65-66.)

Patterson changed his story about whether he initially went to the door of the victim's house or stayed in the truck. (RT 01/29/98, 37-38; 71-72.) He noted in his trial testimony, but not in any pretrial statements, that the defendant had a glove on the night of February 26, 1996. (RT 01/29/98, 77; RT v.9, 139.) During his first interview with Detective Merchant, Patterson did not mention that any strangling of the victim occurred, but in a later interview he stated that the defendant strangled the victim "for a few minutes," then corrected himself and stated "[n]ot a few minutes, but a few seconds." (RT 01/28/98, 78-79.) Patterson's story about how many times he saw the defendant hit the victim with the frying pan changed from one time to two or three times. (RT v.9, 139.)

Detective Hercel Merchant was very forceful in his questioning of Patterson during both the February 26 and March 6, 1996 interviews, applying substantial pressure and at times supplying Patterson with missing facts. (RT 01/29/98, 73; RT v.9, 136-139.) In particular, Detective Merchant reminded Patterson that Patterson had seen the knife on the chair at the victim's house when Patterson, after continued questioning on the subject, could not come up with that detail. (RT 01/28/98, 97-99; 129-131; RT v.9, 136-139.)

alternatively denied the validity of three separate and conflicting prior statements about the events on the night of the murder or stated that he could not recall making them." *State v. Canez*, ___ Ariz. ___, 74 P.3d 932 (2003) (Petitioner's Appendix A) at ¶ 11) There was virtually no physical evidence connecting Appellant to the crime. Co-defendant, however, had several cuts and bruises on his person when he was arrested and admitted he was a participant. The co-defendant was overheard bragging about the "sweet deal" he received for a murder *he had committed.* The co-defendant complained that he should have used a non-stick fry pan to bash in Mr. Hale's skull. The co-defendant authored a written confession to the crime in which he exonerated Canez from any involvement in the murder. The co-defendant received a sentence of ten years. Canez received death.

C. The Crime

The facts of the crime are as set out in *Canez I, State v. Canez*, 202 Ariz. 133, 42 P.3d 564 (2002) and *Canez II, State v. Canez*, ___ Ariz. ___, 74 P.3d 932 (2003) (Petitioner's Appendix A)

D. The Capital Trial and Sentencing

On February 5, 1998, a jury found Canez guilty of felony murder, first degree burglary, and two counts of armed robbery. *State v. Canez*, 202 Ariz. 133, 145, ¶ 15, 42 P.3d 564, 576 (2002). After the jury finding of guilt, the trial judge alone conducted a separate factfinding hearing to determine the existence or non-existence of aggravating and mitigating circumstances, and whether Mr. Canez should live or die. *See* A.R.S. § 13-703(B)(1997).

1. The Mitigating Evidence

The mitigating evidence that was presented is as narrated above. The Arizona Courts' treatment and consideration of the mitigating evidence is as detailed at *State v. Canez*, ___ Ariz. ___, 74 P.3d 932 (2003)(Petitioner's Appendix A) at ¶ 17-¶ 22 .

2. The Aggravating Factors

The judge, acting alone without the input of the jury, The court found four aggravating factors: 13-703(F)(2), (F)(5), (F)(6) and (F)(9), that mitigating circumstances were not sufficiently substantial call for leniency, and that Mr. Canez was the only person who killed the victim. The court sentenced Mr. Canez to death. (R.O.A. #238, 239) The Arizona Supreme Court reversed the findings on part of one of the aggravating circumstances, ARS 13-703(F)(6), determining that the murder was not heinous or depraved.

3. The Judge's Sentencing Decision

The defense proved by a preponderance of the evidence a wealth of mitigating mental health and familial history mitigating evidence. *See State v. Canez* (*Canez II*), ___ Ariz. ___, 74 P.3d 932 (2003)(Petitioner's Appendix A) at ¶ 17-¶ 22 The defense also proved that Canez was mentally retarded. *See id.* at ¶ 23-¶ 27. The judge, however, concluded that much of this evidence, when considered separately and collectively, was not "causally linked" to the crime, and therefore merited no weight. *See State v. Canez* (*Canez I*), 202 Ariz. 133, 42 P.3d 564 (2002) at ¶ 116, ¶ 119 ("The trial court acknowledged that Canez had endured 'violence, suicide, mental illness, and poverty' as a child, but determined that these experiences were 'not sufficiently connected to his conduct at the time of the offense to constitute a substantial relevant mitigating circumstance.' A defendant's difficult childhood is mitigating only where causally connected to his offense."); and ¶ 122.

The judge then made the unilateral decision to impose the death penalty, as Arizona's sentencing statute then authorized. *See also* A.R.S. § 13-703(E).

E. The Direct Appeal

Considering the information never heard by any juror, the Arizona Supreme Court upheld

the trial court's finding of the four aggravating circumstances. *See Canez I, supra.* The Court also upheld the trial court's refusal to find a causal connection between Mr. Canez' social history and mental health evidence and his behavior at the time of the crime. The Court based this decision on a credibility choice between the state and defense experts in testimony never presented to the jury.

F. Canez II

Following this Court's decision in *Ring v. Arizona,* 536 U.S. 584 (2002) (*Ring II*), the Arizona Supreme Court reconsidered Canez' case. *State v. Canez* (*Canez II*), ___ Ariz. ___, 74 P.3d 932 (2003)(Petitioner's Appendix A). The Court found exempt from *Ring II* the trial court's finding of the prior convictions aggravating factor. The Court also concluded that the age of the victim aggravating factor was proved beyond a reasonable doubt and that the error in depriving Canez of a jury determination on this factor was harmless beyond a reasonable doubt. The Court however, reversed the findings on the remaining two aggravating factors: that the murder was motivated by a desire for pecuniary gain and that the murder was committed in an especially heinous, cruel or depraved manner.

The *Canez II* Court stated:

> After reviewing the evidence, we cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury would not have found that Canez proved some of the mitigating factors that the trial judge found were not proven. Furthermore, we cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that a reasonable jury would not have weighed differently the aggravating or mitigating factors that were found or determined that the mitigating factors were "sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." A.R.S. § 13-703(E). Therefore, we conclude that the *Ring II* error was not harmless in this case. *Id.* at ¶ 22

As a matter of law, the Court vacated the sentence of death and remanded for jury findings on each of those elements of the crime of capital murder. Petitioner now asks this Court to reverse

that decision.

REASONS FOR DENYING THE WRIT

I. THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT VACATED THE DEATH SENTENCE ON THE ALTERNATIVE GROUND THAT CANEZ IS MENTALLY RETARDED AND THEREFORE IMMUNE FROM THE DEATH PENALTY UNDER *ATKINS V. VIRGINIA.*

The Arizona Supreme Court's Order vacating the death sentence and remanding to the trial court was two-fold. First, the Arizona trial court was ordered to determine whether Canez was mentally retarded under *Atkins v. Virginia*, 536 U.S. 304 (2002) and therefore not eligible for the death penalty at all. Only after that inquiry, was the trial court ordered to conduct a jury sentencing hearing. The *Canez II* Court said:

> We remand to the trial court to determine whether Canez has mental retardation and therefore is ineligible to receive the death penalty. In making this determination, the trial court should follow the principles announced in *Atkins* and the procedures set forth in A.R.S. § 13-703.02, to the extent possible given the post-trial posture of this case. If the court determines that Canez has mental retardation, the court shall resentence Canez to life or natural life in prison. *See id.* § 13-703.02(A). If the court determines that Canez does not have mental retardation, the court shall conduct a resentencing hearing before a jury. *Id.* at ¶ 27

The *Canez II* Court noted that the evidence supporting Mr. Canez mental retardation claim was quite compelling:

> As discussed above, the evidence presented at Canez's sentencing established that his full-scale IQ was 70, placing him squarely within *Atkins'* definition of subaverage intellectual functioning. Additional evidence established that Canez attended special education classes during grade school, demonstrating that any subaverage mental abilities may have manifested before age 18. Most important, however, is the fact that the evidence concerning Canez's mental abilities was considered only from the viewpoint of establishing mitigation, not as a potential bar to execution. *Id.* at ¶ 26

Petitioner seeks the imposition of a death sentence upon Canez. But he is very likely constitutionally immune from such a sentence, under the Eighth Amendment and *Atkins*, regardless

of the outcome of the litigation of this case. Because the remand to the trial Court was based on alternative grounds, one of which is likely to be dispositive of this case, and which will moot the questions presented, this Court should not grant certiorari.

II. THIS COURT DENIED CERTIORARI IN *ARIZONA V. PANDELI*, WHICH RAISED THE PRECISE QUESTIONS RAISED IN THIS CASE.

This Court denied the state of Arizona's petition for writ of certiorari in *Arizona v. Pandeli*, Case No. 03-15, on October 14, 2003. The questions presented to this Court in *Pandeli* were identical to those raised in this case. Both *Pandeli* and *Canez* were among the group of cases consolidated for review and which resulted in the Arizona Supreme Court decision in *Ring III*, *supra*.

III. THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT'S DECISION RESTS ON AN INTERPRETATION OF STATE PROCEDURAL LAW, AND REACHES A RESULT THIS COURT SAID WAS PERMISSIBLE IN *CLEMONS V. MISSISSIPPI*.

The state's real dispute is not with the Arizona Supreme Court's application of their holdings in *Ring III* to the decision in *Canez II*. The state actually seeks review of the holdings in *State v. Ring*, 65 P.3d 915 (Ariz. 2003)(*Ring III*). But the state did not seek either reconsideration of that decision in the Arizona Supreme Court, or certiorari review in this Court; instead electing to challenge that decision indirectly in Mr. Canez' case. Nevertheless, it is to *Ring III* that this Court must look to examine the basis for the outcome here. Doing so, it is apparent the state court acted well within its prerogative in both cases.

In *Ring III*, the Arizona Supreme Court held that the existence of one aggravating factor which is exempt from *Ring II*, implicit in a jury's verdict, or supported by overwhelming or uncontroverted evidence, does not end that court's harmless error inquiry. The court explained that

"the procedures urged by the State [to end the harmless error inquiry after the finding of one aggravator is deemed harmless] do not reflect any sentencing procedure ever adopted by our legislature." *Ring III*, 65 P.3d at 943. The court went on to describe the consistency of Arizona's statutory capital sentencing scheme that has always "assigned to the same fact-finder the responsibility for considering both aggravating and mitigating factors, as well as for determining whether the mitigating factors, when compared with the aggravators, call for leniency." *Id.* The court explained "[t]he process involved in determining whether mitigating factors prohibit imposing the death penalty plays an important part in Arizona's capital sentencing scheme. [It refused to] speculate about how the State's proposal would impact this essential process." *Id.* The court then cited to *Johnson v. Nevada*, 59 P.3d 450 (Nev. 2002), holding that *Ring II* as applied to Nevada law requires a jury to reweigh mitigating and aggravating factors. *Id.* The court held the same result obtained here.

The court later discussed the need to have a jury decide mitigating circumstances under Arizona law: "Arizona's statutes require more than the presence of one or more statutorily defined aggravating factors to impose the death penalty." *Id.* at 946. Citing Arizona's statute, the court concluded: "[b]ecause a trier of fact must determine whether mitigating circumstances call for leniency, we will affirm a capital sentence only if we conclude, beyond a reasonable doubt, that no rational trier of fact would determine that the mitigating circumstances were sufficiently substantial to call for leniency." *Id.* In Respondent's case, the court specifically referred to the state law discussion in *Ring III*, also citing the Arizona statute at issue, A.R.S. § 13-703. *Canez II* at ¶ 5, ¶ 22.

This result is permissible under this Court's jurisprudence and dictated by the nature of

Arizona's capital sentencing scheme. Arizona is a weighing state. *See State v. Richmond*, 886 P.2d 1329 (1994). In *Clemons*, this Court held that, when constitutional error occurred in a capital sentencing, appellate courts in weighing states could conduct harmless error review, but also could remand for resentencing. *Clemons v. Mississippi*, 494 U.S. 738, 754 (1990)(decision to reweigh or remand "is for state appellate courts. . .to make.")(footnote omitted). As explained above, the Arizona Supreme Court has decided, in deference to the Arizona legislature's policy of requiring pure jury sentencing, it should remand in all cases where it cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that no reasonable jury would have imposed death. That is clearly a permissible choice under *Clemons*.

In fact, Respondent argues below that it is the only constitutionally permissible choice, as this sort of error is not properly subject to harmless error review. *See* Argument ____ *infra*. Although the Arizona Supreme Court held otherwise, its determination of the form that harmless error review should take and the result that review should have in cases such as Respondent's, was reasonable and well within the parameters set by this Court in *Clemons*.

This Court does not sit to review such decisions of state criminal procedure and state sentencing policy. *See* Sup.Ct. R. 10; *Coleman v. Thompson*, 501 U.S. 722, 730 (1991)("if resolution of a federal question cannot affect the judgment, there is nothing for th[is] Court to do."). This Court has given its guidance regarding the Sixth Amendment in *Ring II*. It now should "give state judges a clear[ ] opportunity to develop state jurisprudence unimpeded by federal interference." *Arizona v. Evans*, 514 U.S. 1, 7 (1995), *quoting Michigan v. Long*, 463 U.S. 1032, 1041 (1983). Even if this Court were to review the state law decision in this case, it would find that the Arizona Supreme Court's decision is a sensible one and is true to the legislative intent that was the Arizona

Supreme Court's guide. Arizona has always viewed capital sentencing as something that involves qualitative as well as quantitative determinations. *State v. Van Adams*, 984 P.2d 16, 29 (Ariz. 1999)(noting that supporting evidence of cruelty "affects the strength of the cruelty factor, not its existence"), *citing State v. McKinney*, 917 P.2d 1214, 1225 (Ariz. 1996) (when conducting an independent review of the evidence, consideration is given to the "quality and the strength" of the aggravating and mitigating factors). The Court has long recognized that Arizona's capital sentencing statute "does not require that the number of aggravating circumstances be weighed against the number of mitigating circumstances." *State v. Mauro*, 766 P.2d 59, 81 (Ariz. 1988); *State v. Brookover*, 601 P.2d 1322, 1326 (Ariz. 1979)("One mitigating circumstance. . .may be 'sufficiently substantial' to outweigh two aggravating circumstances."). The Court has explained:

> We do not believe the legislature intended the court to play a numbers game and automatically apply the death penalty when the number of aggravating circumstances found exceeded the number of mitigating circumstances found, any more than it intended to require life imprisonment when the number of mitigating circumstances found exceeded the number of aggravating circumstances found.
> *State v. Valencia*, 645 P.2d 239, 241 (Ariz. 1982).

For this reason, as the Arizona Supreme Court noted, the Arizona legislature has always felt it appropriate to put all decisions relating to capital sentencing–aggravation, mitigation, and penalty--in the hands of a single sentencer, who can bring the same qualitative judgment to the assessment of aggravation, mitigation and penalty. *Ring III*, 65 P.3d at 943.

This case shows why that approach makes sense. The mitigating evidence adduced in this case and found credible by the Arizona Supreme Court went both to the severity of the aggravating factors alleged, as well as the magnitude of the mitigation. The mitigating evidence and information regarding Canez' mental state and history adduced below went both to the severity and weight to be

given to the aggravating circumstances as well as the mitigation to be weighed against them. The aggravating facts were directly related to the Canez' background and disorders. To view those aggravating facts in isolation and without the truer picture provided by the life history information would be to fail to fully assess their weight, as well as their identity and number, which Arizona requires. To artificially divide up the task of assessing aggravation and mitigation in light of such background facts would increase the chance of error and arbitrariness in capital decision making in violation of the Eighth Amendment. That is why the Arizona legislature felt it appropriate to put the sentencing decision in the hands of a single sentencer, under both statutory regimes. That is why the Arizona Supreme Court decided to follow that state legislative dictate in this case and the others it reviewed after *Ring II.*

Arizona's decision to do so does not offend or contravene anything in the federal constitution, or this Court's applicable decisions. To the contrary, it is a choice specifically left open to the states by *Clemons*, and by *Ring II. Ring II*, 536 U.S. at 609, n.7. The exercise of that choice does not call for certiorari review by this Court.

Petitioner emphasizes the different results obtained by several state courts in applying *Ring II* to individual state sentencing schemes. This result, however, obtains because each state sentencing scheme is unique, and each state's law must be applied to that scheme in light of state policy and practice. As noted in *Ring III*, the Nevada Supreme Court's decision on this issue was controlled by Nevada law.

Similarly, in *Woldt v. Martinez*[2], 64 P.3d 256, 262 (Colo. 2003), the Colorado Supreme Court held that Colorado's "three-judge panel capital sentencing statute. . .is unconstitutional on its face

---

[2]Petition for writ of certiorari denied October 6, 2003.

under *Ring*" but that defendants sentenced under that statute were entitled to resentencings "under Colorado law[.]". The court cited to Colorado law interpreting the Colorado death penalty statute in determining which jury findings were eligibility findings. *Id.* at 264 (*quoting People v. Dunlap*, 975 P.2d 723 (Colo. 1999)).

The legal landscape developing after *Ring II* may not be homogenous, but it is not in conflict. Each state has interpreted this Court's decision according to their state capital punishment laws and, as long as those decisions do not violate the requirements of *Ring II* and were left open to them in *Clemons*, that is all this Court requires.

IV. THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT'S DISPOSITION OF THIS CASE CAN AND SHOULD BE AFFIRMED ON OTHER GROUNDS.

If certiorari were granted, this Court would have to consider whether the Arizona Supreme Court's decision is correct for other reasons that were argued to it, but not necessarily adopted by it before considering relief on the grounds urged by Petitioner. There are a number of such reasons which should lead this Court to affirm the decision below. *Arizona v. Fulminante*, 499 U.S. 279, 282 (1991)(decision may be affirmed on grounds other than those stated by lower court).

A. Denial of the Jury Trial Right Guaranteed by Ring is Structural Error That Should Not be Subject to Harmless Error Review.

This Court has held that unlike "an error in the trial process itself . . . structural defects in the constitution of the trial mechanism" can never be harmless. *Arizona v. Fulminante*, 499 U.S. 279, 309-310 (1991). Thus, this Court has refused to find harmless error when the right to jury trial has been "altogether denied," because in such a case "the wrong entity judged the defendant guilty." *Rose v. Clark*, 478 U.S. 570, 578 (1986).

That is precisely the case here. The error was not one by the trial judge, or in the trial

process, but rather in the statutory structure governing capital sentencing – a classic "structural defect in the constitution of the trial mechanism" – that "altogether denied" capital defendants their Sixth Amendment right to have eligibility determinations made by a jury beyond a reasonable doubt. The Arizona statute assigned to the "wrong entity" – the judge – the job of determining the defendant's guilt as to those determinations. As the two *Ring III* dissenters recognized, harmless error review in cases like this "puts the [appellate court] in the position of speculating about one of the great unknowables-what a non-existent jury would have done." *Ring III*, 65 P.3d at 948 (Feldman, J., joined by Chief Justice Jones, concurring in part and dissenting in part). Harmless error analysis cannot apply in such a case.

B. The Jury Trial Right Recognized in Ring Properly Applies to Aggravating Factors Involving Convictions for Other Criminal Conduct: Almendarez-Torres Should be Overruled.

As Justice Thomas' concurrence in *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466 (2000) shows, this Court's decision in *Almendarez-Torres v. United States*, 523 U.S. 224 (1998), suffered from the same constitutional error as *Walton v. Arizona*, 497 U.S. 639 (1990). Petitioner argues that the prior conviction aggravating circumstance found by the trial judge should have determined the outcome here because it exempts the case from the decision in *Ring II*. Thus, if certiorari were granted here, the case will necessarily present the threshold question of whether, in light of the history reviewed there and in *Ring*, this Court should overrule *Almendarez-Torres*.

The Arizona Supreme Court relied on *Almendarez-Torres* in finding the trial judge's determination of the prior conviction aggravating factor harmless. This is problematic for several reasons. First, it misapprehends the holding in *Almendarez-Torres*. As *Apprendi* noted, the defendant in *Almendarez-Torres* presented "no question concerning the right to a jury trial."

Apprendi, 530 U.S. at 488. That question was presented in *Ring II*, where this Court held that "[c]apital defendants . . . are entitled to a jury determination of any fact on which the legislature conditions an increase in their maximum punishment." *Ring II*, 122 S. Ct. at 2432 (emphasis added). The fact of prior conviction squarely meets that description. *See also Apprendi*, 530 U.S. at 487, 489-90.

Moreover, Justice Thomas, voting with a five-member majority in *Apprendi*, determined that his vote in the majority of *Almendarez-Torres* was error. 530 U.S. at 518-21 (Thomas, J., concurring). Thus, it is plain that a five-Justice majority of this Court no longer adheres to that decision.

Third, even if *Almendarez-Torres* remains applicable in the application of *Ring II* in some states, its logic does not apply in Arizona. The statute at issue in *Almendarez-Torres* was a recidivist statute. This distinction compelled the result in that case because recidivism is "a traditional, if not the most traditional, basis for a sentencing court's increasing an offender's sentence," 523 U.S. at 243 (citations omitted), and thus was not an element of the offense in question. *Id.* at 243-244. Arizona, conversely, elected in the capital context to make prior convictions not a penalty for recidivism, but an element of the crime of capital murder as much as any other aggravating factor listed in A.R.S. § 13-703(F). As that Court has explained on numerous occasions:

> Our death penalty statute is not a recidivist or enhancement statute used to warn convicted criminals or encourage reform. . . . The purpose of the aggravation/mitigation hearing is to determine the character and propensities of the defendant. . .. That a defendant has been found guilty of another offense for which life is imposable is directly relevant to this determination. . . . *State v. Walden*, 905 P.2d 974, 994-995 (1995)(citations omitted).

Therefore, Arizona's death sentencing statute explicitly treats prior convictions as elements

of the crime of capital murder, not as recidivist penalty enhancements, and thus does not fall within the narrow exception carved out in *Almendarez-Torres*, but falls squarely within the mandate of *Ring II*. Thus, even if this Court were to grant the petition for writ of cert and reverse the opinion of the Arizona Supreme Court, Mr. Canez would still be entitled to re-sentencing under Arizona law.

C. The Jury Trial Right Recognized in Ring Properly Applies to the Aggravation/Mitigation Balance in States Which Make That Assessment an Eligibility Factor.

Although this Court did not reach the question in *Ring II*, the Arizona Supreme Court's analysis of the weighing question is also correct under federal law. The rule of *Ring II* is this: "[c]apital defendants . . . are entitled to a jury determination of any fact on which the legislature conditions an increase in their maximum punishment." 536 U.S. at 588. Put in context, if a state conditions a sentence of death on the fact that mitigating factors do not outweigh aggravating factors, a jury determination is required. Arizona has done precisely that. The weighing finding in Arizona is not, and never has been, a stage at which the factfinder selects whether or not the defendant should receive death. In fact, until and unless the weighing factor is found, a defendant is categorically excluded from receiving the death penalty. *Ring II* requires that the jury verdict "reflect" the facts the jury found beyond a reasonable doubt "necessary to put . . [the capital defendant] to death." *Ring II*, 536 U.S. at 609. Because the weighing calculus is a necessary factor in an Arizona death sentence, it must be found by a jury beyond a reasonable doubt.

A consensus has developed among all but two death sentencing states that this factor must be determined by a jury, indicating almost total acceptance that the weighing fact is indeed an element of capital murder. This broad recognition in all relevant states that weighing is an element of the crime of capital murder adds force to Justice Breyer's concurring opinion in *Ring II*, and

merits further review by this Court.

D. The Logic of Ring II, and Developments Since Ring II, Make it Apparent That Judge Only Capital Sentencing is Unconstitutional Under the Sixth, Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments, and Spaziano and Cabana Should be Overruled.

The Constitution requires special safeguards in capital cases. *Gregg v. Georgia*, 428 U.S. 153 (1976). In addition to all of the reasons set forth in Justice Breyer's concurring opinion in *Ring II*, the evidence of legislative and judicial agreement since *Ring II* that the weighing of aggravating and mitigating circumstances is an element of the crime of capital murder demonstrates juries must make the ultimate sentencing decision. If this Court grants Arizona's request for certiorari review, this Court should also consider that evolving standards of decency require *Spaziano v. Florida*, 468 U.S. 447 (1984), be overruled on that basis.

Considering statutes enacted both before and after *Ring II*, 36 states have now given sentencing authority to juries. Only Montana and Nebraska fail to do so. Mont. Code Ann. § 46-18-301; Neb. Rev. Stat. § 29-2521. All but three of the 36 states make jury determinations of sentence controlling. This is an overwhelming indication that jury sentencing is required by the Eighth Amendment and is an established part of due process. *See Atkins v. Virginia*, 536 U.S. 304, 314-315 (2002)(discussing 8 states which prohibit execution of the mentally retarded in judging evolving standard of decency by legislative decision), *Enmund v. Florida*, 458 U.S. 782, 789 (1982)(noting that only eight states permitted death sentences in cases where defendant participated in underlying felony but did not attempt or intend to kill). Given the nearly unanimous enactment of jury sentencing by state legislatures, Justice Breyer's dissent in *Ring II* is correct. *Spaziano v. Florida*, 468 U.S. 447 (1984), and *Cabana v. Bullock*, 474 U.S. 376 (1986), should be overruled and these questions, too, will necessarily be included in the issues presented by this case, if certiorari is

granted here.

E. The Arizona Courts Violated Lockett v. Ohio and Eddings v. Oklahoma By Disregarding Mitigating Evidence Where It Is Not Shown To Cause The Defendant's Conduct At The Time Of The Crime.

1. Evidence of a Traumatic Family and Developmental History Is Relevant Mitigating Evidence.

This Court has repeatedly stressed the important and unquestionably mitigating nature of evidence that a capital defendant suffered from childhood abuse, even when the evidence is completely unrelated to the crime for which the defendant is sentenced. *Eddings v. Oklahoma*, 455 U.S. 104, 115 (1982)("There can be no doubt that evidence of a turbulent family history, [and] of beatings by a harsh father ... is particularly relevant [to mitigation]."); *Penry v. Lynaugh*, 492 U.S. 302, 322 (1989)(evidence of childhood abuse is relevant to a capital defendant's "moral culpability" and jurors must be allowed to consider that evidence in assessing punishment); *Burger v. Kemp*, 483 U.S. 776, 789, n.7 (1987)(there is "no doubt" that evidence of a defendant's "exceptionally unhappy and unstable childhood" is "relevant mitigating evidence"). This Court finds evidence of childhood abuse relevant and undeniably mitigating. And this Court does not restrict the consideration of mitigating factors to only those shown to have caused defendants' actions at the time of the crime. *See Williams (Terry) v. Taylor*, 120 S.C. 1495, 1512-1514 (2000)(reversing for defense counsel's failure to investigate and present evidence that documented childhood abuse). Evidence of childhood abuse must be considered as non-statutory mitigation, even if that evidence does not provide a legal excuse from criminal responsibility. *Eddings*, 455 U.S. at 114.

Obviously, extensive childhood abuse and neglect damages one's emotional health. "It defies reason and common experience to suggest that a youngster coming out of [a horrific environment]

was largely unaffected and should be held accountable as any functioning adult." *State v. Hoskins*, 14 P.3d at 1031 (Zlaket, C.J., dissenting). As Chief Justice Rehnquist recognized, "A stable, loving homelife is essential to a child's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. It requires no citation of authority to assert that children who are abused in their youth generally face extraordinary problems developing into responsible, productive citizens." *Santosky v. Kramer*, 455 U.S. 745 (1982). Although medical science is not yet fully capable of quantifying and tracing the causal relationship between such abuse and criminal behavior, medical literature does reveal how childhood physical abuse may have long-term negative repercussions for the defendant's ability to make appropriate judgments, to understand the consequences of his actions, and to control his behavior. Phyllis L. Crocker, *Childhood Abuse and Adult Murder: Implications For The Death Penalty*, 77 N.C.L.Rev 1143, 1185 (1999).

A sentencer must not be precluded from considering a capital defendant's proffered mitigating evidence of "any aspect of defendant's character, or record, and any of the circumstances of the offense" in all but the rarest of cases. *Lockett v. Ohio*, 438 U.S. 586, 604 (1978). Evolving standards of decency and "the fundamental respect for humanity underlying the Eighth Amendment" require individualized sentencing "as a constitutionally indispensable part of inflicting the death penalty." *Eddings v. Oklahoma*, 455 U.S. at 114, *quoting Woodson v. North Carolina*, 428 U.S. 280, 304 (1976). Evidence of childhood abuse is relevant in sentencing because "defendants who commit criminal acts that are attributable to a disadvantaged background, or to emotional and mental problems, may be less culpable" than others. *Penry*, 492 U.S. 302, 319 (1989), *quoting California v. Brown*, 497 U.S. 538, 545 (1987) (O'Connor, J., concurring).

The sentencing body must have a vehicle for assessing the mitigating nature of the evidence

that reflected on the defendant's personal culpability to determine what sentence is warranted. *Penry*, 492 U.S. at 322. "Just as the State may not by statute preclude the sentencer from considering any mitigating factor, neither may the sentencer refuse to consider, as a matter of law, any relevant mitigating evidence." *Eddings*, 455 U.S. at 114. Although courts "may determine the weight to be given relevant mitigating evidence[,]" they "may not give it no weight by excluding such evidence from their consideration." *Id.*, 455 U.S. at 115. Restricting consideration of mitigation creates a risk of an inappropriately severe sentence. *Lockett*, 438 U.S. at 605. Since "the qualitative difference between death and other penalties calls for a greater degree of reliability when the death sentence is imposed," *Id.* at 604, states must be able to consider the mitigating evidence of childhood abuse without having to first find a causal connection between the abuse and the crime. Since it is mitigation, the sentencer should include it in the weighing process.

2. The Arizona Courts Flatly Refuse to Recognize This Court's Prior Holdings That a Traumatic Upbringing Is Mitigating Evidence.

Canez' horrific childhood and resulting emotional troubles were clearly established in a court of law by a preponderance of the evidence. The Arizona Supreme Court agreed that Canez had a traumatic childhood and was mentally ill and impaired. Although the Arizona Supreme Court found Canez' proffered evidence credible, it refused to consider this evidence as mitigation because there was no "causal nexus" between his abysmal childhood and his appreciation of the wrongfulness of the conduct or ability to control his conduct.

Courts in other jurisdictions have faithfully followed this Court's precedent and determine that evidence of a traumatic upbringing is mitigating. Arizona, however, regularly dismisses uncontroverted evidence of childhood abuse as irrelevant in the absence of proof that it somehow

caused the crime. The Arizona Supreme Court has historically restricted its consideration of mitigation where a defendant proves that he suffered an abusive childhood. The Court repeatedly refuses to consider evidence of a dysfunctional family as mitigation without a causal connection to the defendant's ability to perceive, comprehend, or control his actions. *See State v. Sansing*, 26 P.23d 1118, 1131 (2001); *State v. Hoskins*, 14 P.3d 997, 1023 (2000); *State v. Sharp*, 193 Ariz. 414, 973 P.2d 1171 (1999); *State v. Mann*, 188 Ariz. 220, 231, 934 P.2d 784, 795 (1997); *State v. McKinney*, 185 Ariz. 567, 587, 917 P.2d 1214, 1233 (1996); *State v. Laird*, 186 Ariz. 203, 920 P.2d 769 (1996); *State v. Murray (Robert)*, 184 Ariz. 9, 906 P.2d. 542 (1995); *State v. Walden*, 183 Ariz. 595, 905 P.2d 974 (1995); *State v. Ross,* 180 Ariz. 598, 886 P.2d 1354 (1994), *cert. denied*, 516 U.S. 878 (1995). Sentencing judges are prevented, as a matter of Arizona law, from considering proven evidence of a difficult upbringing unless a causal connection is established.

A dysfunctional family background or difficult childhood can be mitigating only if the defendant can establish that early experiences, however negative, affected later criminal behavior in ways that were beyond his control. Thus, family dysfunction ... can be mitigating only when actual causation is demonstrated between early abuses suffered and the defendant's subsequent acts. *Hoskins*, 14 P.3d at 1021. "The factual circumstances of defendant's childhood, though extremely difficult, do not translate into relevant mitigation of his premeditated crimes." *Id.* (emphasis added).

The Arizona statute challenged herein, A.R.S. § 13-703, was found over 13 years ago in *Walton v. Arizona* to be constitutional because Mr. Walton was "not complaining that the Arizona statute or practice excludes from consideration any particular type of mitigating evidence," but instead was challenging the burden of proof by which mitigation should be considered. 497 U.S. 639, 649 (1990). This Court expressly stated that it "has refused to countenance state-imposed

restrictions on what mitigating circumstances may be considered in deciding whether to impose the death penalty." *Id.* "A state may not preclude by statute, nor may a sentencer refuse to consider, any relevant mitigating evidence." *Eddings*, 455 U.S. at 114.

Since *Walton*, however, the Arizona Supreme Court has repeatedly excluded an entire category of mitigating evidence offered by capital defendants: mitigating factors that could not be or were not proven to have caused the crime. Arizona courts are not able to consider a difficult childhood as mitigation, statutory or non-statutory, unless the causal connection is established; thus, entire types of mitigation are precluded in violation of the rule set forth in *Walton.*

This Court found such practice impermissible, where "the sentencing judge did not evaluate the evidence and find it wanting as a matter of fact; rather he found that as a matter of law he was unable to even consider the evidence." *Eddings*, 455 U.S. at 113. A categorical denial of credible evidence of a traumatic childhood because it did not cause the crime is tantamount to denying that evidence as a matter of law. There is a valid distinction between merely disbelieving evidence which a defendant offers and precluding consideration of that mitigating evidence altogether when it is proven. The latter approach, which Arizona takes, is unconstitutional.

After all mitigating evidence is allowed in for consideration, then federal law allows states to structure their consideration of mitigating factors. For example, if a state decided to give more weight to the mitigating factor of age than to the mitigating factor of good behavior in prison, it could do so. Here, there was no "vehicle," under Arizona law, for the sentencing court to "express[] its 'reasoned moral response'" to the mitigating evidence. *See Penry I,* 492 U.S. at 328, and *Eddings*, 455 U.S. 104. A sentencing scheme that precludes individualized sentencing "excludes from consideration in fixing the ultimate punishment of death the possibility of compassionate or

mitigating factors stemming from the diverse frailties of mankind." 492 U.S. at 304. Thus, the causal connection requirement, which excludes relevant evidence and deems it irrelevant, is a direct violation of the Eighth Amendment protections carved out in *Lockett*, *Eddings*, and their progeny.

CONCLUSION

Because the Arizona Supreme Court's decision rests on state law, because this case likely will be disposed of under *Atkins v. Virginia* and thereby rendered moot and because the disposition of the case is correct for a number of reasons in addition to those adopted by the Arizona Supreme Court, the petition for certiorari should be denied. If the petition is granted, the Arizona Supreme Court's decision should be affirmed for all the reasons set out above.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

THOMAS J. PHALEN, ESQ.
TARA K. ALLEN, ESQ.

By: Thomas J. Phalen
Thomas J. Phalen (Counsel of Record)
Attorney for Respondent Canez